

WILLIAM MORRIS

Little Journeys

TO THE HOMES OF

English Authors

BY ELBERT HUBBARD

Volume VI



Done into a PRINTED BOOK
by the ROYCROFTERS at
their SHOP in East Aurora,
Erie County, N. Y., MCM

Copyright 1899, by Elbert Hubbard

INDEX

WILLIAM MORRIS 9

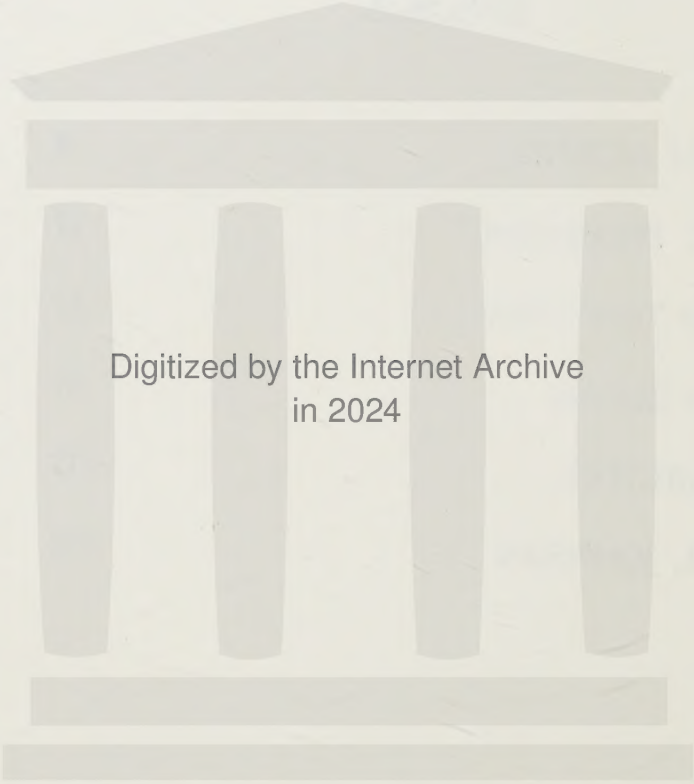
ROBERT BROWNING 37

ALFRED TENNYSON 67

ROBERT BURNS 91

JOHN MILTON 117

SAMUEL JOHNSON 143


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/littlejourneysto0006unse

WILLIAM MORRIS

THE IDLE SINGER

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I can not ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die,—
Remember me a little then, I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

* * * * * * * * *

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

—*From "The Earthly Paradise"*

WILLIAM MORRIS



HE parents of William Morris were well-to-do people who lived in the village of Walthamstow, Essex. The father was a London bill-broker, cool-headed, calculating, practical. In the home of his parents William Morris received small impulse in the direction of art; he, however, was taught how to make both ends meet, and there were drilled into his character many good lessons of plain commonsense—a rather unusual equipment for a poet, but still one that should not be waived or considered lightly. At the village school William was neither precocious nor dull, neither black nor white: his cosmos being simply a sort of slaty-gray, a condition of being which attracted no special attention from either his schoolfellows or his tutors. From the village school he went to Marlborough Academy, where by patient grubbing he fitted himself for Exeter College, Oxford. ¶ Morris, the elder, proved his good sense by taking no very special interest in the boy's education. Violence of direction in education falls flat: man is a lonely creature, and has to work out his career in his own way. To help the grub spin its cocoon is quite unnecessary, and to play the part of Mrs. Gamp with the butterfly in its chrysalis stage is to place a quietus upon its career.

The whole science of modern education is calculated to turn out a good, fairish, commonplace article; but the formula for a genius remains a secret with Deity. The great man becomes great in spite of teachers and parents; and his near kinsmen, being color-blind, usually pooh-pooh the idea that he is anything more than mediocre ¶ At Oxford, William Morris fell in with a young man of about his own age, by the name of Edward Burne-Jones. Burne-Jones was studying theology. He was slender in stature, dreamy, spiritual, poetic. Morris was a giant in strength, blunt in speech, bold in manner, and had a shock of hair like a lion's mane. This was in the year Eighteen Hundred Fifty-three—these young men being nineteen years of age. The slender, yellow, dreamy student of theology and the ruddy athlete became fast friends.

"Send your sons to college and the boys will educate them," said Emerson. These boys read poetry together; and it seems the first author that specially attracted them was Mrs. Browning; and she attracted them simply because she had recently eloped with the man she loved. This fact proved to Morris that she was a worthy woman and a discerning. She had the courage of his convictions. To elope with a poor poet, leaving a rich father and a luxurious home—what nobler ambition? ¶ Burne-Jones, student of theology, considered her action proof of depravity. Morris, in order to show his friend that Mrs. Browning was really a rare and gentle

soul, read aloud to Burne-Jones from her books. Morris himself had never read much of Mrs. Browning's work, but in championing her cause and interesting his friend in her, he grew interested himself. Like lawyers, we undertake a cause first and look for proof later. In teaching another, Morris taught himself. By explaining a theme it becomes luminous to us.

In passing, it is well to note that this impulse in the heart of William Morris to come to the defense of an accused person was ever very strong. His defense of Mrs. Browning led straight to "The Defense of Guinevere," begun while at Oxford and printed in book form in his twenty-fourth year. Not that the offenses of Guinevere and Elizabeth Barrett were parallel, but Morris was by nature a defender of women. And it should further be noted that Tennyson had not yet written his "Idylls of the King," at the time Morris wrote his poetic brief.

Another author that these young men took up at this time was Ruskin. John Ruskin was fifteen years older than Morris—an Oxford man, too; also, the son of a merchant and rich by inheritance. Ruskin's natural independence, his ability for original thinking and his action in embracing the cause of Turner, the ridiculed, won the heart of Morris. In Ruskin he found a writer who expressed the thoughts that he believed. He read Ruskin, and insisted that Burne-Jones should. Together they read "The Nature of Gothic," and then they

went out upon the streets of Oxford and studied examples at first hand. They compared the old with the new, and came to the conclusion that the buildings erected two centuries before had various points to recommend them which modern buildings have not. The modern buildings were built by contractors, while the old ones were constructed by men who had all the time there was, and so they worked out their conceptions of the eternal fitness of things.

Then these young men, with several others, drew up a remonstrance against " the desecration by officious restoration, and the tearing down of time-mellowed structures to make room for the unsightly brick piles of boarding-house keepers."

The remonstrance was sent in to the authorities, and by them duly pigeonholed, with a passing remark that young fellows sent to Oxford to be educated had better attend tc their books and mind their own business. Having espoused the cause of the Middle Ages in architecture, these young men began to study the history of the people who lived in the olden time. They read Spenser and Chaucer, and chance threw in their way a dog-eared copy of Mallory's " Morte d' Arthur," and this was still more dog-eared when they were through with it. Probably no book ever made more of an impression on Morris than this one; and if he had written an article for the " Ladies' Home Journal " on " Books That Influenced Me Most," he would have

placed Mallory's "Morte d' Arthur" first. ¶ The influence of Burne-Jones on Morris was marked, and the influence of Morris on Burne-Jones was profound. Morris discovered himself in explaining things to Burne-Jones, and Burne-Jones, without knowing it, adopted the opinions of Morris; and it was owing to Morris that he gave up theology.

Having abandoned the object that led him to college, Burne-Jones lost faith in Oxford, and went down to London to study art.

Morris hung on, secured his B. A., and articled himself to a local architect with the firm intent of stopping the insane drift for modern mediocrity, and bringing about a just regard for the stately dignity of the Gothic.

A few months' experience, however, and he discovered that an apprentice to an architect was not expected to furnish plans or even criticize those already made: his business was to make detail drawings from completed designs for the contractors to work from.

A year at architecture, with odd hours filled in at poetry and art, and news came from Burne-Jones that he had painted a picture, and sold it for ten pounds.

Now Morris had all the money he needed. His father's prosperity was at flood, and he had but to hint for funds and they came; yet to make things with your own hands and sell them was the true test of success.

He had written "Gertha's Lovers," "The Tale of the Hollow Land," and various poems and essays for the

college magazine; and his book, " The Defense of Guinevere," had been issued at his own expense, and the edition was on his hands—a weary weight.

Thoreau wrote to his friends, when the house burned and destroyed all copies of his first book, " The edition is exhausted," but no such happiness came to Morris. And so when glad tidings of an artistic success came from Burne-Jones, he resolved to follow the lead and abandon architecture for " pure art."

Arriving in London he placed himself under the tutorship of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, poet, dreamer and artist, six years his senior, whom he had known for some time, and who had also instructed Burne-Jones.

While taking lessons in painting at the rather shabby house of Rossetti in Portland Street, he was introduced to Rossetti's favorite model—a young woman of rare grace and beauty. Rossetti had painted her picture as " The Blessed Damozel," leaning over the bar of Heaven, while the stars in her hair were seven. Morris, the impressionable, fell in love with the canvas and then with the woman.

When they were married, tradition has it that Rossetti withheld his blessing and sought to drown his sorrow in fomentations, with dark, dank hints in baritone to the effect that the Thames only could appreciate his grief.

But grief is transient; and for many years Dante Rossetti and Burne-Jones pictured the tall, willowy figure of

Mrs. Morris as the dream-woman, on tapestry and canvas; and as the "Blessed Virgin," her beautiful face and form are shown in many sacred places.

Truth need not be distorted in a frantic attempt to make this an ideal marriage—only a woman with the intellect of Minerva could have filled the restless heart of William Morris. But the wife of Morris believed in her lord, and never sought to hamper him; and if she failed at times to comprehend his genius, it was only because she was human.

Whistler once remarked that without Mrs. Morris to supply stained-glass attitudes and the lissome beauty of an angel, the Preraphaelites would have long since gone down to dust and forgetfulness.

WILLIAM MORRIS

THE year which William Morris spent at architecture, he considered as nearly a waste of time, but it was not so in fact. As a draftsman he had developed a marvelous skill, and the grace and sureness of his lines were a delight to Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Holman Hunt, Ford Madox Brown and others of the little artistic circle in which he found himself ☙ Youth lays great plans; youth is always in revolt against the present order; youth groups itself in bands and swears eternal fealty; and life, which is change, dissipates the plans, subdues the revolt into conformity, and the sworn friendships fade away into dull indifference. Always? Well, no, not exactly ☙ In this instance the plans and dreams found form; the revolt was a revolution that succeeded; and the brotherhood existed for near fifty years, and then was severed only by death.

Without going into a history of the Preraphaelite Brotherhood, it will be noted that the band of enthusiasts in art, literature and architecture had been swung by the arguments and personality of William Morris into the strong current of his own belief, and this was that Art and Life in the Middle Ages were much lovelier things than they are now.

That being so, we should go back to medieval times for our patterns ☙ A study of the best household decorations of the Fifteenth Century showed that all the furniture used then was made to fit a certain

apartment, and with a definite purpose in view. Of course it was made by hand, and the loving marks of the tool were upon it. It was made as good and strong and durable as it could be made. Floors and walls were of mosaic or polished wood, and these were partly covered by beautifully woven rugs, skins and tapestries. The ceilings were sometimes ornamented with pictures painted in harmony with the use for which the room was designed. Certainly there were no chromos and the pictures were few and these of the best, for the age was essentially a critical one.

A modest circular was issued in which the fact was made known that " a company of historical artists will use their talents in home decoration."

Dealers into whose hands this circular fell, smiled in derision, and the announcement made no splash in England's artistic waters. But the leaven was at work which was bound to cause a revolution in the tastes of fifty million people.

Most of our best moves are accidents, and every good thing begins as something else. In the beginning there was no expectation of building up a trade or making a financial success of the business. The idea was simply that the eight young men who composed the band were to use their influence in helping one another to secure commissions, and corroborate the views of doubting patrons as to what was art and what not. In other words, they were to stand by one another.

Ford Madox Brown, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Arthur Hughes were painters; Philip Webb an architect; Peter Paul Marshall a landscape-gardener and engineer; Charles Joseph Faulkner, an Oxford don, was a designer, and William Morris was an all-round artist—ready to turn his hand to anything.

These men undertook to furnish a home from garret to cellar in an artistic way.

Work came, and each set himself to help all the others. From simply supplying designs for furniture, rugs, carpets and wall-paper they began to manufacture these things, simply because they could not buy or get others to make the things they desired.

Morris undertook the entire executive charge of affairs, and mastered the details of half a dozen trades in order that he might intelligently conduct the business. The one motto of the firm was, " Not how cheap, but how good." They insisted that housekeeping must be simplified, and that we should have fewer things and have them better. To this end single pieces of furniture were made, and all sets of furniture discarded. I have seen several houses furnished entirely by William Morris, and the first thing that impressed me was the sparsity of things. Instead of a dozen pictures in a room, there were two or three—one on an easel and one or two on the walls. Gilt frames were abandoned almost entirely, and dark-stained woods were used instead. Wide fireplaces were introduced and mantels of solid

oak. For upholstery, leather covering was commonly used instead of cloth. Carpets were laid in strips, not tacked down to stay, and rugs were laid so as to show a goodly glimpse of hardwood floor; and in the dining-room a large, round table was placed instead of a right-angled square one. This table was not covered with a tablecloth; instead, mats and doilies were used here and there. To cover a table entirely with a cloth or spread was pretty good proof that the piece of furniture was cheap and shabby; so in no William Morris library or dining-room would you find a table entirely covered. The round dining-table is in very general use now, but few people realize how its plainness was scouted when William Morris first introduced it.

One piece of William Morris furniture has become decidedly popular in America, and that is the "Morris Chair." The first chair of this pattern was made entirely by the hands of the master. It was built by a man who understood anatomy, unlike most chairs and all church pews. It was also strong, durable, ornamental, and by a simple device the back could be adjusted so as to fit a man's every mood.

There has been a sad degeneracy among William Morris chairs; still, good ones can be obtained, nearly as excellent as the one in which I rested at Kelmscott House—broad, deep, massive, upholstered with curled hair, and covered with leather that would delight a bookbinder. Such a chair can be used a generation and

then passed on to the heirs. ¶ Furnishing of churches and chapels led naturally to the making of stained-glass windows, and hardly a large city of Christendom but has an example of the Morris work.

Morris managed to hold that erratic genius, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in line and direct his efforts, which of itself was a feat worthy of record. He made a fortune for Rossetti, who was a child in this world's affairs, and he also made a fortune for himself and every man connected with the concern.

Burne-Jones stood by the ship manfully, and proved his good sense by never interfering with the master's plans, or asking foolish, quibbling questions—showing faith on all occasions.

The Morris designs for wall-paper, tapestry, cretonnes and carpets are now the property of the world, but to say just which is a William Morris design and which a Burne-Jones is an impossibility, for these two strong men worked together as one being with two heads and four hands. At one time, I find the firm of Morris and Company had three thousand hands at work in its various manufactories, the work in most instances being done by hand after the manner of the olden time.

William Morris was an avowed socialist long before so many men began to grow fond of calling themselves Christian Socialists. Morris was too practical not to know that the time is not ripe for life on a communal basis, but in his heart was a high and holy ideal that

he has partially explained in his books, " A Dream of John Ball " and " News From Nowhere," and more fully in many lectures. His sympathy was ever with the workingman and those who grind fordone at the wheel of labor. To better the condition of the toiler was his sincere desire. But socialism to him was more of an emotion than a well-worked-out plan of life. He believed that men should replace competition by Co-operation. He used to say: " I 'm going your way, so let us go hand in hand. You help me and I 'll help you. We shall not be here very long, for soon, Death, the kind old nurse, will come and rock us all to sleep—let us help one another while we may." And that is about the extent of the socialism of William Morris.

There is one criticism that has been constantly brought against Morris, and although he answered this criticism a thousand times during his life, it still springs fresh—put forth by little men who congratulate themselves on having scored a point.

They ask in orotund, " How could William Morris expect to benefit society at large, when all of the products he manufactured were so high in price that only the rich could buy them? "

Socialism, according to William Morris, does not consider it desirable to supply cheap stuff to anybody. The socialist aims to make every manufactured article of the best quality possible. It is not how cheap can this be made, but how good. Make it as excellent as it can

be made to serve its end. Then sell it at a price that affords something more than a bare subsistence to the workmen who put their lives into its making. In this way you raise the status of the worker—you pay him for his labor and give him an interest and pride in the product. Cheap products make cheap men. The first thought of socialism is for the worker who makes the thing, not the man who buys it.

Work is for the worker.

What becomes of the product of your work, and how the world receives it, matters little. But how you do it is everything. We are what we are on account of the thoughts we have thought and the things we have done. As a muscle grows strong only through use, so does every attribute of the mind, and every quality of the soul take on new strength through exercise. And on the other hand, as a muscle not used atrophies and dies, so will the faculties of the spirit die through disuse.

¶ Thus we see why it is very necessary that we should exercise our highest and best. We are making character, building soul-fiber; and no rotten threads must be woven into this web of life. If you write a paper for a learned society, you are the man who gets the benefit of that paper—the society may. If you are a preacher and prepare your sermons with care, you are the man who receives the uplift—and as to the congregation, it is all very doubtful.

Work is for the worker.

We are all working out our own salvation. And thus do we see how it is very plain that John Ruskin was right when he said that the man who makes the thing is of far more importance than the man who buys it. Work is for the worker.

Can you afford to do slipshod, evasive, hypocritical work? Can you afford to shirk, or make-believe or practise pretense in any act of life? No, no; for all the time you are molding yourself into a deformity, and drifting away from the Divine. What the world does and says about you is really no matter, but what you think and what you do are questions vital as Fate. No one can harm you but yourself. Work is for the worker.

And so I will answer the questions of the critics as to how society has been benefited by, say, a William Morris book:

1. The workmen who made it found a pride and satisfaction in their work.
2. They received a goodly reward in cash for their time and efforts.
3. The buyers were pleased with their purchase, and received a decided satisfaction in its possession.
4. Readers of the book were gratified to see their author clothed in such fitting and harmonious dress.
5. Reading the text has instructed some, and possibly inspired a few to nobler thinking. ¶ After " The Defense of Guinevere " was published, it was thirteen years before Morris issued another volume. His days had been

given to art and the work of management. But now the business had gotten on to such a firm basis that he turned the immediate supervision over to others, and took two days of the week, Saturday and Sunday, for literature ☙ ☙

Taking up the active work of literature when thirty-nine years of age, he followed it with the zest of youth for over twenty years—until death claimed him. William Morris thought literature should be the product of the ripened mind—the mind that knows the world of men and which has grappled with earth's problems. He also considered that letters should not be a profession in itself—to make a business of an art is to degrade it. Literature should be the spontaneous output of the mind that has known and felt. To work the mine of spirit as a business and sift its product for hire, is to overwork the vein and palm off slag for sterling metal. Shakespeare was a theater-manager, Milton a secretary, Bobby Burns a farmer, Lamb a bookkeeper, Wordsworth a government employee, Emerson a lecturer, Hawthorne a custom-house inspector, and Whitman a clerk. William Morris was a workingman and a manufacturer, and would have been Poet Laureate of England had he been willing to call himself a student of sociology instead of a socialist. Socialism itself (whatever it may be) is not offensive—the word is.

WILLIAM MORRIS

THE great American Apostle of Negation expressed, once upon a day, a regret that he had not been consulted when the Universe was being planned, otherwise he would have arranged to make good things catching instead of bad. The remark tokened a slight lesion in the logic of the Apostle, for good things are now, and ever have been, infectious.

Once upon a day, I met a young man who told me that he was exposed at Kelmscott House for a brief hour, and caught it, and ever after there were in his mind, thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideals that had not been there before. Possibly the psychologist would explain that the spores of all these things were simply sleeping, awaiting the warmth and sunshine of some peculiar presence to start them into being; but of that I can not speak—this only I know, that the young man said to me, " Whereas I was once blind, I now see."

¶ William Morris was a giant in physical strength and a giant in intellect. His nature was intensely masculine, in that he could plan and act without thought of precedent. Never was a man more emancipated from the trammels of convention and custom than William Morris. ¶ Kelmscott House at Hammersmith is in an ebbtide district where once wealth and fashion held sway; but now the vicinity is given over to factories, tenement-houses and all that train of evil and vice that follows in the wake of faded gentility.

At Hammersmith you will see spacious old mansions used as warehouses; others as boarding-houses; still others converted into dance-halls with beer-gardens in the rear, where once bloomed and blossomed milady's flowerbeds

The broad stone steps and wide hallways and iron fences, with glimpses now and then of ancient door-plates or more ancient knockers, tell of generations lost in the maze of oblivion.

Just why William Morris, the poet and lover of harmony, should have selected this locality for a home is quite beyond the average ken. Certainly it mystified the fashionable literary world of London, with whom he never kept goose-step, but that still kept track of him—for fashion has a way of patronizing genius—and some of his old friends wrote him asking where Hammersmith was, and others expressed doubts as to its existence. I had no difficulty in taking the right train for Hammersmith, but once there no one seemed to have ever heard of the Kelmscott Press. When I inquired, grave misgivings seemed to arise as to whether the press I referred to was a cider-press, a wine-press or a press for " cracklings."

Finally I discovered a man—a workingman—whose face beamed at the mention of William Morris. Later I found that if a man knew William Morris, his heart throbbed at the mention of his name, and he at once grew voluble and confidential and friendly. It was the

" Open Sesame." And if a person did not know William Morris, he simply did n't, and that was all there was about it.

But the man I met knew " Th' Ole Man," which was the affectionate title used by all the hundreds and thousands who worked with William Morris. And to prove that he knew him, when I asked that he should direct me to the Upper Mall, he simply insisted on going with me. Moreover, he told a needless lie and declared he was on the way there, although when we met he was headed in the other direction. By a devious walk of half a mile we reached the high iron fence of Kelmscott House. We arrived amid a florid description of the Icelandic Sagas as told by my new-found friend and interpreted by Th' Ole Man. My friend had not read the Sagas, but still he did not hesitate to recommend them; and so we passed through the wide-open gates and up the stone walk to the entrance of Kelmscott House. On the threshold we met F. S. Ellis and Emery Walker, who addressed my companion as " Tom." I knew Mr. Ellis slightly, and also had met Mr. Walker, who works Rembrandt miracles with a camera. Mr. Ellis was deep in seeing the famous " Chaucer " through the press, and Mr. Walker had a print to show, so we turned aside, passed a great pile of paper in crates that cluttered the hallway, and entered the library. There, leaning over the long, oaken table, in shirt-sleeves, was the master. Who could mistake that great,

shaggy head, the tangled beard, and frank, open-eyed look of boyish animation?

The man was sixty and more, but there was no appearance of age in eye, complexion, form or gesture—only the whitened hair! He greeted me as if we had always known each other, and Ellis and piles of Chaucer proof led straight to old Professor Child of Harvard, whose work Ellis criticized and Morris upheld. They fell into a hot argument, which was even continued as we walked across the street to the Doves Bindery ☙ The Doves Bindery, as all good men know, is managed by Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, who married one of the two daughters of Richard Cobden of Corn-Law fame. ¶ Just why Mr. Sanderson, the lawyer, should have borrowed his wife's maiden name and made it legally a part of his own, I do not know. Anyway, I quite like the idea of linking one's name with that of the woman one loves, especially when it has been so honored by the possessor as the name of Cobden.

Cobden-Sanderson caught the rage for beauty from William Morris, and began to bind books for his own pleasure. Morris contended that any man who could bind books as beautifully as Cobden-Sanderson should not waste his time with law. Cobden-Sanderson talked it over with his wife, and she being a most sensible woman, agreed with William Morris ☙ So Cobden-Sanderson, acting on Th' Ole Man's suggestion, rented the quaint and curious mansion next door to the old

house occupied by the Kelmscott Press, and went to work binding books.

When we were once inside the Bindery, the Chaucerian argument between Mr. Ellis and Th' Ole Man shifted off into a wrangle with Cobden-Sanderson. I could not get the drift of it exactly—it seemed to be the continuation of some former quarrel about an oak leaf or something. Anyway, Th' Ole Man silenced his opponent by smothering his batteries—all of which will be better understood when I explain that Th' Ole Man was large in stature, bluff, bold and strong-voiced, whereas Cobden-Sanderson is small, red-headed, meek, and wears bicycle-trousers.

The argument, however, was not quite so serious an affair as I at first supposed, for it all ended in a laugh and easily ran off into a quiet debate as to the value of Imperial Japan versus Whatman.

We walked through the various old parlors that now do duty as workrooms for bright-eyed girls, then over through the Kelmscott Press, and from this to another old mansion that had on its door a brass plate so polished and repolished, like a machine-made sonnet too much gone over, that one can scarcely make out its intent. Finally I managed to trace the legend, "The Seasons." I was told it was here that Thomson, the poet, wrote his book. Once back in the library of Kelmscott House, Mr. Ellis and Th' Ole Man leaned over the great oaken table and renewed, in a gentler

key, the question as to whether Professor Child was justified in his construction of the Third Canto of the "Canterbury Tales." Under cover of the smoke I quietly disappeared with Mr. Cockerill, the Secretary, for a better view of the Kelmscott Press.

This was my first interview with William Morris. By chance I met him again, some days after, at the shop of Emery Walker in Clifford Court, Strand. I had been told on divers occasions by various persons that William Morris had no sympathy for American art and small respect for our literature. I am sure this was not wholly true, for on this occasion he told me he had read "Huckleberry Finn," and doted on "Uncle Remus." He also spoke with affection and feeling of Walt Whitman, and told me that he had read every printed word that Emerson had written. And further he congratulated me on the success of my book, "Songs From Vagabondia."

THE housekeeping world seems to have been in thrall to six haircloth chairs, a slippery sofa to match, and a very cold, marble-top center table, from the beginning of this century down to comparatively recent times. In all the best homes there was also a marble mantel to match the center table; on one end of this mantel was a blue glass vase containing a bouquet of paper roses, and on the other a plaster-of-Paris cat. Above the mantel hung a wreath of wax flowers in a glass case. In such houses were usually to be seen gaudy-colored carpets, imitation lace curtains, and a what-not in the corner that seemed ready to go into dissolution through the law of gravitation. ¶ Early in the Seventies lithograph-presses began to make chromos that were warranted just as good as oil-paintings, and these were distributed in millions by enterprising newspapers as premiums for subscriptions. Looking over an old file of the " Christian Union " for the year Eighteen Hundred Seventy-one, I chanced upon an editorial wherein it was stated that the end of painting pictures by hand had come, and the writer piously thanked heaven for it—and added, " Art is now within the reach of all." Furniture, carpets, curtains, pictures and books were being manufactured by machinery, and to glue things together and give them a look of gentility and get them into a house before they fell apart, was the seeming desideratum of all manufacturers

The editor of the "Christian Union" surely had a basis of truth for his statement; art had received a sudden chill: palettes and brushes could be bought for half-price, and many artists were making five-year contracts with lithographers; while those too old to learn to draw on lithograph-stones saw nothing left for them but to work designs with worsted in perforated cardboard ☙ ☙

To the influence of William Morris does the civilized world owe its salvation from the mad rage and rush for the tawdry and cheap in home decoration. It will not do to say that if William Morris had not called a halt some one else would, nor to cavil by declaring that the inanities of the Plush-Covered Age followed the Era of the Hair-Cloth Sofa. These things are frankly admitted, but the refreshing fact remains that fully one-half the homes of England and America have been influenced by the good taste and vivid personality of one strong, earnest man.

William Morris was the strongest all-round man the century has produced. He was an Artist and a Poet in the broadest and best sense of these much-bandied terms. William Morris could do more things, and do them well, than any other man of either ancient or modern times whom we can name. William Morris was master of six distinct trades. He was a weaver, a blacksmith, a wood-carver, a painter, a dyer and a printer; and he was a musical composer of no mean ability.

Better than all, he was an enthusiastic lover of his race: his heart throbbed for humanity, and believing that society could be reformed only from below, he cast his lot with the toilers, dressed as one of them, and in the companionship of workingmen found a response to his holy zeal which the society of an entailed aristocracy denied.

The man who could influence the entire housekeeping of half a world, and give the kingdom of fashion a list to starboard; who could paint beautiful pictures; compose music; speak four languages; write sublime verse; address a public assemblage effectively; produce plays; resurrect the lost art of making books, books such as were made only in the olden time as a loving, religious service; who lived a clean, wholesome, manly life—beloved by those who knew him best—shall we not call him Master?



ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

So, take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim:
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same.

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*

ROBERT BROWNING



IF there ever lived a poet to whom the best minds pour out libations, it is Robert Browning. We think of him as dwelling on high Olympus; we read his lines by the light of dim candles; we quote him in sonorous monotone at twilight when soft-sounding organ-chants come to us mellow and sweet. Browning's poems form a lover's litany to that elect few who hold that the true mating of a man and a woman is the marriage of the mind. And thrice blest was Browning, in that Fate allowed him to live his philosophy—to work his poetry up into life, and then again to transmute life and love into art. Fate was kind: success came his way so slowly that he was never subjected to the fierce, dazzling searchlight of publicity; his recognition in youth was limited to a few obscure friends and neighbors. And when distance divided him from these, they forgot him; so there seems a hiatus in his history, when for a score of years literary England dimly remembered some one by the name of Browning, but could not just place him.

About the year Eighteen Hundred Sixty-eight the author of "Sordello" was induced to appear at an evening of "Uncut Leaves" at the house of a nobleman at the West End, London. James Russell Lowell

was present and was congratulated by a lady, sitting next to him, on the fact that Browning was an American. ¶ "But only by adoption!" answered the gracious Lowell

"Yes," said the lady; "I believe his father was an Englishman, so you Americans can not have all the credit; but surely he shows the Negro or Indian blood of his mother. Very clever, is n't he?—so very clever!" ¶ Browning's swarthy complexion, and the fine poise of the man—the entire absence of "nerves," as often shown in the savage—seemed to carry out the idea that his was a peculiar pedigree. In his youth, when his hair was as black as the raven's wing and coarse as a horse-tail, and his complexion mahogany, the report that he was a Creole found ready credence. And so did this gossip of mixed parentage follow him that Mrs. Sutherland Orr, in her biography, takes an entire chapter to prove that in Robert Browning's veins there flowed neither Indian nor Negro blood.

Doctor Furnivall, however, explains that Browning's grandmother on his father's side came from the West Indies, that nothing is known of her family history, and that she was a Creole.

And beyond this, the fact is stated that Robert Browning was quite pleased when he used to be taken for a Jew—a conclusion made plausible by his complexion, hair and features.

In its dead-serious, hero-worshiping attitude, the life

of Robert Browning by Mrs. Orr deserves to rank with Weems' "Life of Washington." It is the brief of an attorney for the defense. "Little-Willie" anecdotes appear on every page.

And thus do we behold the tendency to make Browning something more than a man—and, therefore, something less.

Possibly women are given to this sort of thing more than men—I am not sure. But this I know, every young woman regards her lover as a distinct and peculiar personage, different from all others—as if this were a virtue—the only one of his kind. Later, if Fate is kind, she learns that her own experience is not unique. We all easily fit into a type, and each is but a representative of his class.

Robert Browning sprang from a line of clerks and small merchants; but as indemnity for the lack of a family 'scutcheon, we are told that his uncle, Reuben Browning, was a sure-enough poet. For once in an idle hour he threw off a little thing for an inscription to be placed on a presentation ink-bottle, and Disraeli seeing it, declared, "Nothing like this has ever before been written!" ℵ ℵ

Beyond doubt, Disraeli made the statement—it bears his earmark. It will be remembered that the Earl of Beaconsfield had a stock form for acknowledging receipt of the many books sent to him by aspiring authors. It ran something like this: "The Earl of Beaconsfield

begs to thank the gifted author of ——— for a copy of his book, and gives the hearty assurance that he will waste no time in reading the volume."

And further, the fact is set forth with unction that Robert Browning was entrusted with a latchkey early in life, and that he always gave his mother a good-night kiss. He gave her the good-night kiss willy-nilly. If she had retired when he came home, he used the trusty latchkey and went to her room to imprint on her lips the good-night kiss. He did this, the biographer would have us believe, to convince the good mother that his breath was what it should be; and he awakened her so she would know the hour was seasonable.

In many manufactories there is an electric apparatus wherewith every employee registers when he arrives, by turning a key or pushing a button. Robert Browning always fearlessly registered as soon as he got home—this according to Mrs. Orr.

Unfortunately, or otherwise, there is a little scattered information which makes us believe that Robert Browning's mother was not so fearful of her son's conduct, nor suspicious as to his breath, as to lie awake nights and keep tab on his hours. The world has never denied that Robert Browning was entrusted with a latchkey, and it cares little if occasionally, early in life, he fumbled for the keyhole. And my conception of his character is such that, when in the few instances Aurora, rosy goddess of the morn, marked his

homecoming with chrome-red in the eastern sky, he did not search the sleeping-rooms for his mother to apprise her of the hour.

In one place Mrs. Orr avers, in a voice hushed with emotion, that Browning carefully read all of Johnson's Dictionary "as a fit preparation for a literary career." ¶ Without any attempt to deny that the perusal of a dictionary is "fit preparation for a literary career," I yet fear me that the learned biographer, in a warm anxiety to prove the man exceeding studious and very virtuous, has tipped a bit to t' other side.

She has apotheosized her subject—and in an attempt to portray him as a peculiar person, set apart, has well-nigh given us a being without hands, feet, eyes, ears, organs, dimensions, passions.

But after a careful study of the data, various visits to the places where he lived in England, trips to Casa Guidi, views from Casa Guidi windows, a journey to Palazzo Rezzonico at Venice, where he died, and many a pious pilgrimage to Poets' Corner, in Westminster Abbey, where he sleeps, I am constrained to believe that Robert Browning was made from the same kind of clay as the rest of us. He was human—he was splendidly human

ROBERT BROWNING

BROWNING'S father was a bank-clerk; and Robert Browning, the Third, author of "Paracelsus," could have secured his father's place in the Bank of England, if he had had ambitions. And the fact that he had not was a source of silent sorrow to the father, even to the day of his death, in Eighteen Hundred Sixty-six.

Robert Browning, the grandfather, entered the Bank as an errand-boy, and rose by slow stages to Principal of the Stock-Room. He served the Bank full half a century, and saved from his salary a goodly competence. This money, tightly and rightly invested, passed to his son. The son never secured the complete favor of his employers that the father had known, but he added to his weekly stipend by what a writer terms, "legitimate perquisites." This, being literally interpreted, means that he purchased paper, pens and sealing-wax for the use of the Bank, and charged the goods in at his own price, doubtless with the consent of his superior, with whom he divided profits. He could have parodied the remark of Fletcher of Saltoun and said, "Let me supply the perquisite-requisites and I care not who makes the laws." So he grew rich—moderately rich—and lived simply and comfortably up at Camberwell, with only one besetting dissipation: he was a book-collector and had learned more Greek than Robert the Third was to acquire. He searched bookstalls on the way to the City in the morning, and lay in wait for

First Editions on the way home at night. When he had a holiday, he went in search of a book. He sneaked books into the house, and declared to his admonishing wife the next week that he had always owned 'em, or that they were presented to him. The funds his father had left him, his salary and " the perquisites," made a goodly income, but he always complained of poverty. He was secretly hoarding sums so as to secure certain books

The shelves grew until they reached the ceiling, and then bookcases invaded the dining-room. The collector did n't trust his wife with the household purchasing; no bank-clerk ever does—and all the pennies were needed for books. The good wife, having nothing else to do, grew anemic, had neuralgia and lapsed into a Shut-In, wearing a pale-blue wrapper and reclining on a couch, around which were piled—mountain-high—books

The pale invalid used to imagine that the great cases were swaying and dancing a minuet, and she fully expected the tomes would all come a-toppling down and smother her—and she did n't care much if they would; but they never did. She was the mother of two children —the boy Robert, born the year after her marriage; and in a little over another year a daughter came, and this closed the family record.

The invalid mother was a woman of fine feeling and much poetic insight. She did n't talk as much about

books as her husband did, but I think she knew the good ones better. The mother and son moused in books together, and Mrs. Orr is surely right in her suggestion that this love of mother and son took upon itself the nature of a passion.

The love of Robert Browning for Elizabeth Barrett was a revival and a renewal, in many ways, of the condition of tenderness and sympathy that existed between Browning and his mother. There certainly was a strange and marked resemblance in the characters of Elizabeth Barrett and the mother of Robert Browning; and to many this fully accounts for the instant affection that Browning felt toward the occupant of the "darkened room," when first they met ❧ The book-collector took much pride in his boy, and used to take him on book-hunting excursions, and sometimes to the Bank, on which occasions he would tell the Beef-Eaters how this was Robert Browning, the Third, and that all three of the R. B.'s were loyal servants of the Bank. And the Beef-Eaters would rest their staves on the stone floor, and smile Fifteenth-Century grimaces at the boy from under their cocked hats ❧ ❧

Robert the Third was a healthy, rollicking lad, with power plus, and a deal of destructiveness in his nature. But destructiveness in a youngster is only energy not yet properly directed, just as dirt is useful matter in the wrong place.

To keep the boy out of mischief, he was sent to a sort of kindergarten, kept by a spinster around the corner. The spinster devoted rather more attention to the Browning boy than to her other pupils—she had to, to keep him out of mischief—and soon the boy was quite the head scholar.

And they tell us that he was so much more clever than any of the other scholars that, to appease the rising jealousy of the parents of the other pupils, the diplomatic spinster requested that the boy be removed from her school—all this according to the earnest biographer. The facts are that the boy had so much energy and restless ambition; was so full of brimming curiosity, mischief and imagination—introducing turtles, bats and mice on various occasions—that he led the whole school a merry chase and wore the nerves of the ancient maiden to a frazzle.

He had to go.

After this he studied at home with his mother. His father laid out a schedule, and it was lived up to, for about a week.

Then a private tutor was tried, but soon this plan was abandoned, and a system of reading, best described as " natural selection," was followed.

The boy was fourteen, and his sister was twelve, past. These are the ages when children often experience a change of heart, as all " revivalists " know. Robert Browning was swinging off towards atheism. He grew

melancholy, irritable and wrote stanzas of sentimental verse. He showed this verse, high-sounding, stilted, bold and bilious, to his mother and then to his father, and finally to Lizzie Flower.

A word about Lizzie Flower: She was nine years older than Robert Browning; and she had a mind that was gracious and full of high aspiration. She loved books, art, music, and all harmony made its appeal to her—and not in vain. She wrote verses and, very sensibly, kept them locked in her workbox; and then she painted in water-colors and worked in worsted. A thoroughly good woman, she was far above the average in character, with a half-minor key in her voice and a tinge of the heartbroken in her composition, caused no one just knew how. Probably a certain young curate at Saint Margaret's could have thrown light on this point; but he married, took on a double chin, moved away to a fat living and never told.

No woman is ever wise or good until destiny has subdued her by grinding her fondest hopes into the dust ☙ Lizzie Flower was wise and good.

She gave singing lessons to the Browning children. She taught Master Robert Browning to draw.

She read to him some of her verses that were in the sewing-table drawer. And her sister, Sarah Flower, two years older, afterwards Sarah Flower Adams, read aloud to them a hymn she had just written, called, "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

Then soon Master Robert showed the Flower girls some of the verses he had written.

Robert liked Lizzie Flower first-rate, and told his mother so. A young woman never cares anything for an unlicked cub, nine years younger than herself, unless Fate has played pitch and toss with her heart's true love. And then, the tendrils of the affections being ruthlessly lacerated and uprooted, they cling to the first object that presents itself.

Lizzie Flower was a wallflower. That is to say, she had early in life rid herself of the admiration of the many, by refusing to supply an unlimited amount of small talk. In feature she was as plain as George Eliot. A boy is plastic, and even a modest wallflower can woo him; but a man, for her, inspires awe—with him she takes no liberties. And the wallflower woos the youth unwittingly, thinking the while she is only using her influence the better to instruct him.

It is fortunate for a boy escaping adolescence to be educated and loved (the words are synonymous) by a good woman. Indeed, the youngster who has not violently loved a woman old enough to be his mother has dropped something out of his life that he will have to go back and pick up in another incarnation.

I said Robert liked Lizzie Flower first-rate; and she declared that he was the brightest and most receptive pupil she had ever had.

He was seventeen—she was twenty-six. They read

Shelley, Keats and Byron aloud, and together passed through the "Byronic Period." They became violently atheistic, and at the same time decidedly religious: things that seem paradoxical, but are not. They adopted a vegetable diet and for two years they eschewed meat. They worshiped in the woods, feeling that the groves were God's first temples; and sitting at the gnarled roots of some great oak, they would read aloud, by turn, from "Queen Mab."

On one such excursion out across Hampstead Heath they lost their copy of "Shelley" in the leaves, and a wit has told us that it sprouted, and as a result—the flower and fruit—we have Browning's poem of "Pauline." And this must be so, for Robert and Miss Flower (he always called her "Miss Flower," but she called him "Robert") made many an excursion, in search of the book, yet they never found it.

Robert now being eighteen, a man grown—not large, but very strong and wiry—his father made arrangements for him to take a minor clerkship in the Bank. But the boy rebelled—he was going to be an artist, or a poet, or something like that.

The father argued that a man could be a poet and still work in a bank—the salary was handy; and there was no money in poetry. In fact, he himself was a poet, as his father had been before him. To be a bank-clerk and at the same time a poet—what nobler ambition!

The young man was still stubborn. He was feeling

discontented with his environment: he was cramped, cabined, cribbed, confined. He wanted to get out of the world of petty plodding and away from the silly round of conventions, out into the world of art—or else of barbarism—he did n't care which.

The latter way opened first, and a bit of wordy warfare with his father on the subject of idleness sent him off to a gipsy camp at Epsom Downs. How long he lived with the vagabonds we do not know, but his swarthy skin, and his skill as a boxer and wrestler, recommended him to the ragged gentry, and they received him as a brother.

It is probable that a week of pure vagabondia cured him of the idea that civilization is a disease, for he came back home, made a bonfire of his attire, and after a vigorous tubbing, was clothed in his right mind.

Groggy studies in French under a private tutor followed, and then came a term as special student in Greek at London University.

To be nearer the school, he took lodgings in Gower Street; but within a week a slight rough-house incident occurred that crippled most of the furniture in his room and deprived the stair-rail of its spindles. R. Browning, the Second, bank-clerk, paid the damages, and R. Browning, the Third, aged twenty, came back home, formally notifying all parties concerned that he had chosen a career—it was Poetry. He would woo the Divine Goddess, no matter who opposed. There, now!

His mother was delighted; his father gave reluctant consent, declaring that any course in life was better than vacillation; and Miss Flower, who probably had sown the dragon's teeth, assumed a look of surprise, but gave it as her opinion that Robert Browning would yet be Poet Laureate of England.

ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING awoke one morning with a start—it was the morning of his thirtieth birthday. One's thirtieth birthday and one's seventieth are days that press their message home with iron hand. With his seventieth milestone past, a man feels that his work is done, and dim voices call to him from across the Unseen. His work is done, and so illy, compared with what he had wished and expected! But the impressions made upon his heart by the day are no deeper than those his thirtieth birthday inspires. At thirty, youth, with all it palliates and excuses, is gone forever. The time for mere fooling is past; the young avoid you, or else look up to you as a Nestor and tempt you to grow reminiscent. You are a man and must give an account of yourself.

Out of the stillness came a Voice to Robert Browning saying, " What hast thou done with the talent I gave thee? "

What had he done? It seemed to him at the moment as if he had done nothing. He arose and looked into the mirror. A few gray hairs were mixed in his beard; there were crow's feet on his forehead; and the first joyous flush of youth had gone from his face forever. He was a bachelor, inwardly at war with his environment, but making a bold front with his tuppence worth of philosophy to conceal the unrest within.

A bachelor of thirty, strong in limb, clear in brain and yet a dependent! No one but himself to support, and

could n't even do that! Gadzooks! Fie upon all poetry and a plague upon this dumb, dense, shopkeeping, beer-drinking nation upon which the sun never sets!

The father of Robert Browning had done everything a father could. He had supplied board and books, and given his son an allowance of a pound a week for ten years. He had sent him on a journey to Italy, and published several volumes of the young man's verse at his own expense. And these books were piled high in the garret, save a few that had been bought by charitable friends or given away.

Robert Browning was not discouraged—oh no, not that!—only the world seemed to stretch out in a dull, monotonous gray, where once it was green, the color of hope, and all decked with flowers.

The little literary world of London knew Browning and respected him. He was earnest and sincere and his personality carried weight. His face was not handsome, but his manner was one of poise and purpose; and to come within his aura and look into his calm eyes was to respect the man and make obeisance to the intellect that you felt lay behind.

A few editors had gone out of their way to " discover " him to the world, but their lavish reviews fell flat. Buyers would not buy—no one seemed to want the wares of Robert Browning. He was hard to read, difficult, obscure—or else there was n't anything in it at all —they did n't know which.

Fox, editor of the "Repository," had met Browning at the Flowers' and liked him. He tried to make his verse go, but could n't. Yet he did what he could and insisted that Browning should go with him to the "Sunday evenings" at Barry Cornwall's. There Browning met Leigh Hunt, Monckton Milnes and Dickens ☙ Then there were dinner-parties at Sergeant Talfourd's, where he got acquainted with Wordsworth, Walter Savage Landor and Macready.

Macready impressed him greatly and he impressed Macready. He gave the actor a copy of "Paracelsus" (one of the pile in the garret) and Macready suggested he write a play. "Strafford" was the result, and we know it was stillborn, and caused a very frosty feeling to exist for many a year between the author and the actor. When a play fails, the author blames the actor and the actor damns the author. These men were human. ¶ Of course Browning's kinsmen all considered him a failure, and when the father paid over the weekly allowance he often rubbed it in a bit. Lizzie Flower had modified her prophecy as to the Laureateship, but was still loyal. They had tiffed occasionally, and broken off the friendship, and once I believe returned letters. To marry was out of the question—he could n't support himself—and besides that, they were old, demnition old; he was past thirty and she was forty—Gramercy! They tiffed.

Then they made up.

In the meantime Browning had formed a friendship, very firm and frank, but strictly Platonic, of course, for Fanny Haworth. Miss Haworth had seen more of the world than Miss Flower—she was an artist, a writer, and moved in the best society. Browning and Miss Haworth wrote letters to each other for a while most every day, and he called on her every Wednesday and Saturday evening.

Miss Haworth bought and gave away many copies of "Pauline," "Sordello" and "Paracelsus"; and informed her friends that "Pippa Passes" and "Two in a Gondola" were great quality.

About this time we find Edward Moxon, the publisher (who married the adopted daughter of Charles and Mary Lamb), saying to Browning: "Your verse is all right, Browning, but a book of it is too much: people are appalled; they can not digest it. And when it goes into a magazine it is lost in the mass. Now just let me get out your work in little monthly instalments, in booklet form, and I think it will go."

Browning jumped at the idea.

The booklets were gotten out in paper covers and offered at a moderate price.

They sold, and sold well. The literary elite bought them by the dozen to give away.

People began to talk about Browning—he was getting a foothold. His royalties now amounted to as much as the weekly allowance from his father, and Pater was

talking of cutting off the stipend entirely. Finances being easy, Browning thought it a good time to take another look at Italy. Some of the best things he had written had been inspired by Venice and Asolo—he would go again. And so he engaged passage on a sailing-ship for Naples.

SHORTLY after Browning's return to London, in Eighteen Hundred Forty-four, he dined at Sergeant Talfourd's. After the dinner a well-dressed and sprightly old gentleman introduced himself and begged that Browning would inscribe a copy of "Bells and Pomegranates," that he had gotten specially bound. There is an ancient myth about writers being harassed by autograph-fiends and all that; but the simple fact is, nothing so warms the cockles of an author's heart as to be asked for his autograph. Of course Browning graciously complied with the gentleman's request, and in order that he might insert the owner's name in the inscription, asked:

"What name, please?"

And the answer was, "John Kenyon."

Then Mr. Browning and Mr. Kenyon had a nice little visit, talking about books and art. And Mr. Kenyon told Mr. Browning that Miss Elizabeth Barrett, the poetess, was a cousin of his—he was a bit boastful of the fact ☙ ☙

And Mr. Browning nodded and said he had often heard of her, and admired her work.

Then Mr. Kenyon suggested that Mr. Browning write and tell her so—"You see she has just gotten out a new book, and we are all a little nervous about how it is going to take. Miss Barrett lives in a darkened room, you know—sees no one—and a letter from a man like you would encourage her greatly."

Mr. Kenyon wrote the address of Miss Barrett on a card and pushed it across the table.

Mr. Browning took the card, put it in his pocketbook and promised to write Miss Barrett, as Mr. Kenyon requested ☙ ☙

And he did.

Miss Barrett replied.

Mr. Browning answered, and soon several letters a week were going in each direction.

Not quite so many missives were being received by Fanny Haworth; and as for Lizzie Flower, I fear she was quite forgotten. She fell into a decline, drooped and died in a year.

Mr. Browning asked for permission to call on Miss Barrett ☙ ☙

Miss Barrett explained that her father would not allow it, neither would the doctor or nurse, and added: "There is nothing to see in me. I am a weed fit for the ground and darkness."

But this repulse only made Mr. Browning want to see her the more. He appealed to Mr. Kenyon, who was the only person allowed to call, besides Miss Mitford —Mr. Kenyon was her cousin.

Mr. Kenyon arranged it—he was an expert at arranging anything of a delicate nature. He timed the hour when Mr. Barrett was down town, and the nurse and doctor safely out of the way, and they called on the invalid prisoner in the darkened room.

They did not stay long, but when they went away Robert Browning trod on air. The beautiful girl-like face, in its frame of dark curls, lying back among the pillows, haunted him like a shadow. He was thirty-three, she was thirty-five. She looked like a child, but the mind—the subtle, appreciative, receptive mind! The mind that caught every allusion, that knew his thought before he voiced it, that found nothing obscure in his work, and that put a high and holy construction on his every sentence—it was divine! divinity incarnated in a woman.

¶ Robert Browning tramped the streets forgetful of meat, drink or rest.

He would give this woman freedom. He would devote himself to restoring her to the air and sunshine. What nobler ambition! He was an idler, he had never done anything for anybody. He was only a killer of time, a vagrant, but now was his opportunity—he would do for this beautiful soul what no one else on earth could do. She was slipping away as it was—the world would soon lose her. Was there none to save?

Here was the finest intellect ever given to a woman—so sure, so vital, so tender and yet so strong!

He would love her back to life and light!

And so Robert Browning told her all this shortly after, but before he told, she had divined his thought. For solitude and loneliness and heart-hunger had given her the power of an astral being; she was in communication with all the finer forces that pervade our ether.

He would love her back to life and light—he told her so. She grew better. ¶ And soon we find her getting up and throwing wide the shutters. It was no longer the darkened room, for the sunlight came dancing through the apartment, driving out all the dark shadows that lurked therein ☙ The doctor was indignant; the nurse resigned. ¶ Of course, Mr. Barrett was not taken into confidence and no one asked his consent. Why should they?—he was the man who could never understand ☙ So one fine day when the coast was clear, the couple went over to Saint Marylebone Church and were married. The bride went home alone—could walk all right now—and it was a week before her husband saw her, because he would not be a hypocrite and go ring the doorbell and ask if Miss Barrett was home; and of course if he had asked for Mrs. Robert Browning, no one would have known whom he wanted to see.

But at the end of a week, the bride stole down the stairs, while the family was at dinner, leading her dog Flush by a string, and all the time, with throbbing heart, she prayed the dog not to bark. I have oft wondered in the stilly night season what the effect on English Letters would have been, had the dog really barked! But the dog did not bark; and Elizabeth met her lover-husband there on the corner where the mail-box is. No one missed the runaways until the next day, and then the bride and groom were safely in France, writing letters back from Dieppe, asking forgiveness and craving blessings.



HE is the Genius and I am the Clever Person," Browning used to say. And this I believe will be the world's final judgment.

Browning knew the world in its every phase—good and bad, high and low, society and commerce, the shop and gypsy camp. He absorbed things, assimilated them, compared and wrote it out.

Elizabeth Barrett had never traveled, her opportunities for meeting people had been few, her experiences limited, and yet she evolved truth: she secreted beauty from within.

For two years after their elopement they did not write —how could they? goodness me! They were on their wedding-tour. They lived in Florence and Rome and in various mountain villages in Italy.

Health came back, and joy and peace and perfect love were theirs. But it was joy bought with a price—Elizabeth Barrett Browning had forfeited the love of her father. Her letters written him came back unopened, books inscribed to him were returned—he declared she was dead.

Her brothers, too, discarded her, and when her two sisters wrote, they did so by stealth, and their letters, meant to be kind, were steel for her heart. Then her father was rich; and she had always known every comfort that money could buy. Now, she had taken up with a poor poet, and every penny had to be counted —absolute economy was demanded ❧ And Robert

Browning, with a certain sense of guilt upon him, for depriving her of all the creature comforts she had known, sought by tenderness and love to make her forget the insults her father heaped upon her.

As for Browning, the bank-clerk, he was vexed that his son should show so little caution as to load himself up with an invalid wife, and he cut off the allowance, declaring that if a man was old enough to marry, he was also old enough to care for himself. He did, however, make his son several "loans"; and finally came to "bless the day that his son had sense enough to marry the best and most talented woman on earth."

Browning's poems were selling slowly, and Mrs. Browning's books brought her a little royalty, thanks to the loyal management of John Kenyon, and so absolute want and biting poverty did not overtake the runaways.

¶ After the birth of her son, in Eighteen Hundred Forty-nine, Mrs. Browning's health seemed to have fully returned. She used to ride horseback up and down the mountain passes, and wrote home to Miss Mitford that love had turned the dial backward and the joyousness of girlhood had come again to her.

When John Kenyon died and left them ten thousand pounds, all their own, it placed them forever beyond the apprehension of want, and also enabled them to do for others; for they pensioned old Walter Savage Landor, and established him in comfortable quarters around the corner from Casa Guidi.

I intimated a moment ago that their honeymoon continued for two years. This was a mistake, for it continued for just fifteen years, when the beautiful girl-like form, with her head of flowing curls upon her husband's shoulder, ceased to breathe. Painlessly and without apprehension or premonition, the spirit had taken its flight

That letter of Miss Blagdon's, written some weeks after, telling of how the stricken man paced the echoing hallways at night crying, " I want her! I want her! " touches us like a great, strange sorrow that once pierced our hearts.

But Robert Browning's nature was too strong to be subdued by grief. He remembered that others, too, had buried their dead, and that sorrow had been man's portion since the world began. He would live for his boy—for Her child.

But Florence was no longer his Florence, and he made haste to settle up his affairs and go back to England. He never returned to Florence, and never saw the beautiful monument, designed by his lifelong friend, Frederick Leighton.

When you visit the little English Cemetery at Florence, the slim little girl that comes down the path, swinging the big bunch of keys, opens the high iron gate and leads you, without word or question, straight to the grave of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Browning was forty-nine when Mrs. Browning died.

And by the time he had reached his fiftieth meridian, England, harkening to America's suggestion, was awakening to the fact that he was one of the world's great poets.

Honors came slowly, but surely: Oxford with a degree; Saint Andrew's with a Lord-Rectorship; publishers with advance payments. And when Smith and Elder paid one hundred pounds for the poem of "Herve Riel," it seemed that at last Browning's worth was being recognized. Not, of course, that money is the infallible test, but even poetry has its Rialto, where the extent of appreciation is shown by prices current. Browning's best work was done after his wife's death; and in that love he ever lived and breathed. In his seventy-fifth year, it filled his days and dreams as though it were a thing of yesterday, singing in his heart a perpetual eucharist.

"The Ring and the Book" must be regarded as Browning's crowning work. Offhand critics have disposed of it, but the great minds go back to it again and again. In the character of Pompilia the author sought to pay tribute to the woman whose memory was ever in his mind; yet he was too sensitive and shrinking to fully picture her. He sought to mask his inspiration; but tender, loving recollections of "Ba" are interlaced and interwoven through it all.

When Robert Browning died, in Eighteen Hundred Eighty-nine, the world of literature and art uncovered

in token of honor to one who had lived long and well and had done a deathless work. And the doors of storied Westminster opened wide to receive his dust.

ALFRED TENNYSON

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Nor of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam.

—*Merlin*



ALFRED TENNYSON

ALFRED TENNYSON



HE grandfather of Tennyson had two sons, the elder boy, according to Clement Scott, being "both wilful and commonplace." Now, of course, the property and honors and titles, according to the law of England, would all gravitate to the commonplace boy; and the second son, who was competent, dutiful and worthy, would be out in the cold world—simply because he was accidentally born second and not first. It was not his fault that he was born second, and it was in no wise to the credit of the other that he was born first.

So the father, seeing that the elder boy had small executive capacity, and no appreciation of a Good Thing, disinherited him, giving him, however, a generous allowance, but letting the titles go to the second boy, who was bright and brave and withal a right manly fellow

Personally, I 'm glad the honors went to the best man. But Hallam Tennyson, son of the poet, sees only rank injustice in the action of his ancestor, who deliberately set his own opinion of right and justice against precedent as embodied in English Law. As a matter of strictest justice, we might argue that neither boy was entitled to anything which he had not earned, and that, in

dividing the property between them, instead of allowing it all to drift into the hands of the one accidentally born first, the father acted wisely and well.

But neither Alfred nor Hallam Tennyson thought so. How much their opinions were biased by the fact that they were descendants of the firstborn son, we can not say. Anyway, the descendants of the second son, the Honorable Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt, have made no protest of which I can learn, about justice having been defeated.

Considering this subject of the Law of Entail one step further, we find that Hallam, the present Lord Tennyson, is a Peer of the Realm simply because his father was a great poet, and honors were given him on that account by the Queen. These honors go to Hallam, who, as all men agree, is in many ways singularly like his grandfather.

Genius is not hereditary, but titles are. Hallam is eminently pleased with the English Law of Entail, save that he questions whether any father has the divine right to divert his titles and wealth from the eldest son. Lord Hallam's arguments are earnest and well expressed, but they seem to show that he is lacking in what Herbert Spencer calls the " value sense "—in other words, the sense of humor.

Hallam's lack of perspective is further demonstrated by his patient efforts to explain who the various Tennysons were. In my boyhood days I thought there

was but one Tennyson. On reading Hallam's book, however, one would think there were dozens of them. To keep these various men, bearing one name, from being confused in the mind of the reader, is quite a task; and to better identify one particular Tennyson, Hallam always refers to him as " Father," or " My Father." In the course of a recent interview with W. H. Seward, of Auburn, New York, I was impressed by his dignified, respectful, and affectionate references to " Seward." " This belonged to Seward," and " Seward told me"—as though there were but one. In these pages I will speak of Tennyson—there has been but one—there will never be another.

ALFRED TENNYSON



THINK Clement Scott is a little severe in his estimate of the character of Tennyson's father, although the main facts are doubtless as he states them. The Reverend George Clayton Tennyson, Rector of Somersby and Wood Enderby parishes, was a typical English parson. As a boy he was simply big, fat and lazy. His health was so perfect that it overtopped all ambition, and having no nerves to speak of, his sensibilities were very slight.

When he was disinherited in favor of his younger brother, a keen, nervous, forceful fellow, he accepted it as a matter of course. His career was planned for him: he " took orders," married the young woman his folks selected, and slipped easily into his proper niche —his adipose serving as a buffer for his feelings. In his intellect there was no flash, and his insight into the heart of things was small.

Being happily married to a discreet woman who managed him without ever letting him be aware of it, and having a sure and sufficient income, and never knowing that he had a stomach, he did his clerical work (with the help of a curate), and lived out the measure of his days, no wiser at the last than he was at thirty.

¶ In passing, we may call attention to the fact that the average man is a victim of Arrested Development, and that the fleeting years bring an increase of knowledge only in very exceptional cases. Health and prosperity are not pure blessings—a certain element of

discontent is necessary to spur men on to a higher life. ¶ The Reverend George Clayton Tennyson had income enough to meet his wants, but not enough to embarrass him with the responsibility of taking care of it. Each quarterly stipend was spent before it arrived, and the family lived on credit until another three months rolled around. They had roast beef as often as they wanted it; in the cellar were puncheons, kegs and barrels, and as there was no rent to pay nor landlords to appease, care sat lightly on the Rector.

Elizabeth, this man's wife, is worthy of more than a passing note. She was the daughter of the Reverend Stephen Fytche, vicar of Louth. Her family was not so high in rank as the Tennysons, because the Tennysons belonged to the gentry. But she was intelligent, amiable, fairly good-looking, and being the daughter of a clergyman, had beyond doubt a knowledge of clerical needs; so it was thought she would make a good wife for the newly appointed incumbent of Somersby.

The parents arranged it, the young folks were willing, and so they were married—and the bridegroom was happy ever afterward.

And why should n't he have been happy? Surely no man was ever blessed with a better wife! He had made a reach into the matrimonial grab-bag and drawn forth a jewel. This jewel was many-faceted. Without affectation or silly pride, the clergyman's wife did the work that God sent her to do. The sense of duty was strong upon

her. Babies came, once each two years, and in one case two in one year, and there was careful planning required to make the income reach, and to keep the household in order. Then she visited the poor and sick of the parish, and received the many visitors. And with it all she found time to read. Her mind was open and alert for all good things. I am not sure that she was so very happy, but no complaints escaped her. In all she bore twelve children—eight sons and four daughters. Ten of these children lived to be over seventy-five years of age. The fourth child that came to her they named Alfred

ALFRED TENNYSON

TENNYSON'S education in early youth was very slight. His father laid down rules and gave out lessons, but the strictness of discipline never lasted more than two days at a time. The children ran wild and roamed the woods of Lincolnshire in search of all the curious things that the woods hold in store for boys. The father occasionally made stern efforts to " correct " his sons. In the use of the birch he was ambidextrous. But I have noticed that in households where a strap hangs behind the kitchen-door, for ready use, it is not utilized so much for pure discipline as to ease the feelings of the parent. They say that expression is a need of the human heart; and I am also convinced that in many hearts there is a very strong desire at times to " thrash " some one. Who it is makes little difference, but children being helpless and the law giving us the right, we find gratification by falling upon them with straps, birch-rods, slippers, ferules, hairbrushes or apple-tree sprouts.

No student of pedagogics now believes that the free use of the rod ever made a child "good "; but all agree that it has often served as a safety-valve for a pent-up emotion in the parent or teacher.

The father of Alfred Tennyson applied the birch, and the boy took to the woods, moody, resentful, solitary. There was good in this, for the lad learned to live within himself, and to be self-sufficient: to love the solitude, and feel a kinship with all the life that makes

the groves and fields melodious. ¶ In Eighteen Hundred Twenty-eight, when nineteen years of age, Alfred was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge. He remained there three years, but left without a degree, and what was worse, with the ill-will of his teachers, who seemed to regard his as a hopeless case. He would n't study the books they wanted him to, and was never a candidate for academic distinctions.

College life, however, has much to recommend it beside the curriculum. At Cambridge, Tennyson made the acquaintance of a group of young men who influenced his life profoundly. Kemble, Milnes, Brookfield and Spedding remained his lifelong friends; and as all good is reciprocal, no man can say how much these eminent men owe to the moody and melancholy Tennyson, or how much he owes to them.

ALFRED TENNYSON

TENNYSON began to write verse very young. His first line is said to have been written at five, and he has told of going when thirteen years of age to visit his grandfather, and of presenting him a poem. The old gentleman gave him half a guinea with the remark, " This is the first money you ever made by writing poetry, and take my word for it, it will be the last! " When eighteen years of age, with his brother, Charles, he produced a thin book of thin verses

We have the opinion of Coleridge to the effect that the only lines which have any merit in the book are those signed C. T. Charles became a clergyman of marked ability, married rich, and changed his name from Tennyson to Turner for economic and domestic reasons. Years afterward, when Alfred had become Poet Laureate, rumor has it he thought of changing the " Turner " back to " Tennyson," but was unable to bring it about.

The only honor captured by Alfred at Cambridge was a prize for his poem, " Timbuctoo." The encouragement that this brought him, backed up by Arthur Hallam's declaiming the piece in public—as a sort of defi to detractors—caused him to fix his attention more assiduously on verse. He could write—it was the only thing he could do—and so he wrote.

At Cambridge he was in the habit of reading his poetry to a little coterie called " The Apostles," and he always

premised his reading with the statement that no criticism would be acceptable.

The year he was twenty-one he published a small book called, " Poems, Chiefly Lyrical." The books went a-begging for many years; but times change, for a copy of this edition was sold by Quaritch in Eighteen Hundred Ninety-five for one hundred eighty pounds. The only piece in the book that seems to show genuine merit is " Mariana."

Two years afterward a second edition, revised and enlarged, was brought out. This book contains " The Lady of Shalott," " The May Queen," "A Dream of Fair Women " and " The Lotus-Eaters."

Beyond a few fulsome reviews from personal friends and a little surly mention from the tribe of Jeffrey, the volume attracted little or no attention. This coldness on the part of the public shot an atrabilarian tint through the ambition of our poet, and the fond hope of a success in literature faded from his mind.

And then began what Stopford Brooke has called " the ten fallow years in the life of Tennyson." But fallow years are not all fallow. The dark brooding night is as necessary for our life as the garish day. Great crops of wheat that feed the nations grow only where the winter's snow covers all as with a garment. And ever behind the mystery of sleep, and beneath the silence of the snow, Nature slumbers not nor sleeps.

The withholding of quick recognition gave the mind of

Tennyson an opportunity to ripen. Fate held him in leash that he might be saved for a masterly work, and all the time that he lived in semi-solitude and read and thought and tramped the fields, his soul was growing strong and his spirit was taking on the silken self-sufficient strength that marked his later days. This hiatus of ten years in the life of our poet is very similar to the thirteen fallow years in the career of Browning. These men crossed and recrossed each other's pathway, but did not meet for many years. What a help they might have been to each other in those years of doubt and seeming defeat! But each was to make his way alone

Browning seemed to grow through society and travel, but solitude served the needs of Tennyson.

"There must be a man behind every sentence," said Emerson. After ten years of silence, when Tennyson issued his book, the literary world recognized the man behind it. Tennyson had grown as a writer, but more as a man. And after all, it is more to be a man than a poet. All who knew Tennyson, and have written of him, especially during those early years, begin with a description of his appearance. His looks did not belie the man. In intellect and in stature he was a giant. The tall, athletic form, the great shaggy head, the classic features, and the look of untried strength were all thrown into fine relief by the modesty, the half-embarrassment, of his manner.

To meet the poet was to acknowledge his power. No man can talk as wise as he can look, and Tennyson never tried to. His words were few and simple.

Those who met him went away ready to back his lightest word. They felt there was a man behind the sentence ✍ ✍

Carlyle, who was a hero-worshiper, but who usually limited his worship to those well dead and long gone hence, wrote of Tennyson to Emerson: "One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of dusky hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking, clothes cynically loose, free and easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to."

And then again, writing to his brother John: "Some weeks ago, one night, the poet Tennyson and Matthew Arnold were discovered here sitting smoking in the garden. Tennyson had been here before, but was still new to Jane—who was alone for the first hour or two of it. A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-colored, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free and easy; who swims outwardly and inwardly, with great composure, in an articulate element as of tranquil chaos

and tobacco-smoke; great now and then when he does emerge; a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man." ¶ The " English Idylls," put forth in Eighteen Hundred Forty-two, contained all the poems, heretofore published, that Tennyson cared to retain. It must be stated to the credit, or discredit, of America, that the only complete editions of Tennyson were issued by New York and Boston publishers. These men seized upon the immature early poems of Tennyson, and combining them with his later books, issued the whole in a style that tried men's eyes—very proud of the fact that " this is the only complete edition," etc. Of course they paid the author no royalty, neither did they heed his protests, and possibly all this prepared the way for frosty receptions of daughters of quick machine-made American millionaires, who journeyed to the Isle of Wight in after-days. Soon after the publication of " English Idylls," Alfred Tennyson moved gracefully, like a ship that is safely launched, into the first place among living poets. He was then thirty-three years of age, with just half a century, lacking a few months, yet to live. In all that half-century, with its many conflicting literary judgments, his title to first place was never seriously questioned. Up to Eighteen Hundred Forty-two, in his various letters, and through his close friends, we learn that Tennyson was sore pressed for funds. He had n't money to buy books, and when he traveled it was through the munificence of some kind kinsman. He

even excuses himself from attending certain social functions on account of his lack of suitable raiment—probably with a certain satisfaction.

But when he tells of his poverty to Emily Sellwood, the woman of his choice, there is anguish in his cry. In fact, her parents succeeded in breaking off her relations with Tennyson for a time, on account of his very uncertain prospects. His brothers, even those younger than he, had slipped into snug positions—" but Alfred dreams on with nothing special in sight." Poetry, in way of a financial return, is not to be commended. Honors were coming Tennyson's way as early as Eighteen Hundred Forty-two, but it was not until Eighteen Hundred Forty-five, when a pension of two hundred pounds a year was granted him by the Government, that he began to feel easy. Even then there were various old scores to liquidate.

The year Eighteen Hundred Fifty, when he was forty-one, has been called his " golden year," for in it occurred the publication of " In Memoriam," his appointment to the post of Poet Laureate, and his marriage.

Emily Sellwood had waited for him all these years. She had been sought after, and had refused several good offers from eligible widowers and others who pitied her sad plight and looked upon her as an old maid forlorn. But she was true to her love for Alfred. Possibly she had not been courted quite so assiduously as Tennyson's mother had been. When that dear

old lady was past eighty she became very deaf, and the family often ventured to carry on conversations in her presence which possibly would have been modified had the old lady been in full possession of her faculties. On a day as she sat knitting in the chimney-corner, one of her daughters in a burst of confidence to a visitor, said, " Why, before Mamma married Papa she had received twenty-three offers of marriage! " " Twenty-four, my dear—twenty-four," corrected the old lady as she shifted the needles.

No one has ever claimed that Tennyson was an ideal lover. Surely he never could have been tempted to do what Browning did—break up the peace of a household by an elopement. His love was a thing of the head, weighed carefully in the scales of his judgment. His caution and good sense saved him from all Byronic excesses, or foolish alliances such as took Shelley captive. He believed in law and order, and early saw that his interests lay in that direction. He belonged to the Church of England, and doubtless thought as he pleased, but ever expressed himself with caution.

It is easy to accuse Tennyson of being insular—to say that he is merely " the poet of England." Had he been more he would have been less. World-poets have usually been revolutionists, and dangerous men who exploded at an unknown extent of concussion. None of them has been a safe man—none respectable. Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Hugo and Whitman were outcasts.

Tennyson is always serene, sane and safe—his lines breathe purity and excellence. He is the poet of religion, of the home and fireside, of established order, of truth, justice and mercy as embodied in law.

Very early he became a close personal friend of Queen Victoria, and many of his lines ministered to her personal consolation. For fifty years Tennyson's life was one steady, triumphal march. He acquired wealth, such as no other English poet before him had ever gained; his name was known in every corner of the earth where white men journeyed, and at home he was beloved and honored. He died October Sixth, Eighteen Hundred Ninety-two, aged eighty-three, and for him the Nation mourned, and with deep sincerity the Queen spoke of his demise as a poignant, personal sorrow.

IT was at Cambridge he met Arthur Hallam—Arthur Hallam, immortal and remembered alone for being the comrade and friend of Tennyson

Alfred took his friend Arthur to his home in Lincolnshire one vacation, and we know how Arthur became enamored of Tennyson's sister Emily, and they were betrothed. Together, Tennyson and Hallam made a trip through France and the Pyrenees.

Carlyle and Milburn, the blind preacher, once sat smoking in the little arbor back of the house in Cheyne Row. They had been talking of Tennyson, and after a long silence Carlyle knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and with a grunt said: "Ha! Death is a great blessing—the joyousest blessing of all! Without death there would ha' been no 'In Memoriam,' no Hallam, and like enough no Tennyson!" It is futile to figure what would have occurred had this or that not happened, since every act of life is a sequence. But that Carlyle and many others believed that the death of Hallam was the making of Tennyson, there is no doubt. Possibly his soul needed just this particular amount of bruising in order to make it burst into undying song—who knows! When Charles Kingsley was asked for the secret of his exquisite sympathy and fine imagination, he paused a space, and then answered—"I had a friend." The desire for friendship is strong in every human heart. We crave the companionship of those who

can understand. The nostalgia of life presses, we sigh for "home," and long for the presence of one who sympathizes with our aspirations, comprehends our hopes and is able to partake of our joys. A thought is not our own until we impart it to another, and the confessional seems a crying need of every human soul. ¶ One can bear grief, but it takes two to be glad. We reach the Divine through some one, and by dividing our joy with this one we double it, and come in touch with the Universal. The sky is never so blue, the birds never sing so blithely, our acquaintances are never so gracious, as when we are filled with love for some one.

Being in harmony with one we are in harmony with all. ¶ The lover idealizes and clothes the beloved with virtues that exist only in his imagination. The beloved is consciously or unconsciously aware of this, and endeavors to fulfil the high ideal; and in the contemplation of the transcendent qualities that his mind has created, the lover is raised to heights otherwise unattainable. ¶ Should the beloved pass from the earth while this condition of exaltation endures, the conception is indelibly impressed upon the soul, just as the last earthly view is said to be photographed upon the retina of the dead. The highest earthly relationship is, in its very essence, fleeting, for men are fallible, and living in a world where material wants jostle, and time and change play their ceaseless parts, gradual obliteration comes

and disillusion enters. But the memory of a sweet affinity once fully possessed, and snapped by Fate at its supremest moment, can never die from out the heart. All other troubles are swallowed up in this, and if the individual is of too stern a fiber to be completely crushed into the dust, time will come bearing healing, and the memory of that once ideal condition will chant in the heart a perpetual eucharist.

And I hope the world has passed forever from the nightmare of pity for the dead: they have ceased from their labors and are at rest.

But for the living, when death has entered and removed the best friend, Fate has done her worst; the plummet has sounded the depths of grief, and thereafter nothing can inspire terror. At one fell stroke all petty annoyances and corroding cares are sunk into nothingness. The memory of a great love lives enshrined in undying amber. It affords a ballast 'gainst all the storms that blow, and although it lends an unutterable sadness, it imparts an unspeakable peace. Where there is this haunting memory of a great love lost, there are always forgiveness, charity and a sympathy that makes the man brother to all who suffer and endure. The individual himself is nothing: he has nothing to hope for, nothing to lose, nothing to win, and this constant memory of the high and exalted friendship that once was his is a nourishing source of strength; it constantly purifies the mind and inspires the heart to nobler living and diviner

thinking. The man is in communication with Elemental Conditions ☙ ☙

To know an ideal friendship and to have it fade from your grasp and flee as a shadow before it is touched with the sordid breath of selfishness, or sullied by misunderstandings, is the highest good. And the constant dwelling in sweet, sad recollection on the exalted virtues of the one that has gone, tends to crystallize these very virtues in the heart of him who meditates them. The beauty with which love adorns its object becomes at last the possession of the one who loves.

At the hour when the strong and helpful, yet tender and sympathetic, friendship of Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam was at its height, there came a brief and abrupt word from Vienna to the effect that Arthur was dead.

> " In Vienna's fatal walls
> God's finger touched him and he slept! "

The shock of surprise, followed by dumb, bitter grief, made an impression on the youthful mind of Tennyson that the sixty years which followed did not obliterate ☙ At first a numbness and a deadness came over his spirit, but this condition erelong gave way to a sweet contemplation of the beauties of character that his friend possessed, and he tenderly reviewed the gracious hours they had spent together.

" In Memoriam " is not one poem; it is made up of

many " short swallow-flights of song that dip their wings in tears and skim away." There are one hundred thirty separate songs in all, held together by the silken thread of love for the poet's lost friend.

Seventeen years were required for their evolution. Some people, misled by the title, possibly, think of these poems as a wail of grief for the dead, a vain cry of sorrow for the lost, or a proud parading of mourning millinery. Such views could not be more wholly wrong. ¶ To every soul that has loved and lost, to those who have stood by open graves, to all who have beheld the sun go down on less worth in the world, these songs are a victor's cry. They tell of love and life that rise phenix-like from the ashes of despair; of doubt turned to faith; of fear which has become serenest peace.

All poems that endure must have this helpful, uplifting quality. Without violence of direction they must be beacon-lights that gently guide stricken men and women into safe harbors.

The " Invocation," written nearly a score of years after Hallam's death, reveals Tennyson's personal conquest of pain. His thought has broadened from the sense of loss into a stately march of conquest over death for the whole human race. The sharpness of grief has wakened the soul to the contemplation of sublime ideas—truth, justice, nobility, honor, and the sense of beauty as shown in all created things. The man once loved a person—now his heart goes out to

the universe. The dread of death is gone, and he calmly contemplates his own end and waits the summons without either impatience or fear. He realizes that death itself is a manifestation of life—that it is as natural and just as necessary.

" Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me,
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea."

The desire for sympathy and the wish for friendship are in his heart, but the fever of unrest and the spirit of revolt are gone. His heart, his hope, his faith, his life, are freely laid on the altar of Eternal Love.

ROBERT BURNS

TO JEANNIE

Come, let me take thee to my breast,
  And pledge we ne'er shall sunder;
And I shall spurn, as vilest dust,
  The warld's wealth and grandeur.

And do I hear my Jeannie own
  That equal transports move her?
I ask for dearest life, alone,
  That I may live to love her.

Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
  I clasp my countless treasure;
I 'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share
  Than sic a moment's pleasure.

And by thy een, sae bonnie blue,
  I swear I 'm thine for ever:
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
  And break it shall I never.

—*Robert Burns*



ROBERT BURNS

ROBERT BURNS



HE business of Robert Burns was love-making.

All love is good, but some kinds of love are better than others. Through Burns' penchant for falling in love we have his songs. A Burns bibliography is simply a record of his love-affairs, and the spasms of repentance that followed his lapses are made manifest in religious verse.

Poetry is the very earliest form of literature, and is the natural expression of a person in love; and I suppose we might as well admit the fact at once that without love there would be no poetry.

Poetry is the bill and coo of sex. All poets are lovers, and all lovers, either actual or potential, are poets. Potential poets are the people who read poetry; and so without lovers the poet would never have a market for his wares.

¶ If you have ceased to be moved by religious emotion; if your spirit is no longer exalted by music, and you do not linger over certain lines of poetry, it is because the love-instinct in your heart has withered to ashes of roses. It is idle to imagine Bobby Burns as a staid member of the Kirk; had he been so, there would now be no Bobby Burns. The literary ebullition of Robert Burns (he himself has told us) began shortly after he

had reached the age of indiscretion; and the occasion was his being paired in the hayfield, according to the Scottish custom, with a bonnie lassie. This custom of pairing still endures, and is what the students of sociology call an expeditious move. The Scotch are great economists—the greatest in the world. Adam Smith, the father of the science of economics, was a Scotchman; and Draper, author of "A History of Civilization," flatly declares that Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" has influenced the people of Earth for good more than any other book ever written—save none.

The Scotch are great conservators of energy.

The practise of pairing men and women in the hayfield gets the work done. One man and one woman going down the grass-grown path afield might linger and dally by the way. They would never make hay, but a company of a dozen or more men and women would not only reach the field, but do a lot of work. In Scotland the hay-harvest is short—when the grass is in bloom, just right to make the best hay, it must be cut. And so the men and women, the girls and boys, sally forth. It is a jolly picnic-time, looked forward to with fond anticipation, and after recalled with sweet, sad memories, or otherwise, as the case may be.

But they all make hay while the sun shines, and count it joy. Liberties are allowed during haying-time that otherwise would be declared scandalous; during haying-time the Kirk waives her censor's right, and priest

and people mingle joyously. Wives are not jealous during hay-harvest, and husbands never faultfinding, because they each get even by allowing a mutual license. In Scotland during haying-time every married man works alongside of some other man's wife. To the psychologist it is somewhat curious how the desire for propriety is overridden by a stronger desire—the desire for the shilling. The Scotch farmer says, "Anything to get the hay in"—and by loosening a bit the strict bands of social custom, the hay is harvested ☙ In the hay-harvest the law of natural selection holds; partners are often arranged for weeks in advance; and trysts continue year after year. Old lovers meet, touch hands in friendly scuffle for a fork, drink from the same jug, recline at noon and eat lunch in the shade of a friendly stack, and talk to heart's content, sweetening the labor of the long summer day.

Of course this joyousness of the haying-time is not wholly monopolized by the Scotch. Have n't you seen the jolly haying parties in Southern Germany, France, Switzerland and the Tyrol? How the bright costumes of the men and the jaunty attire of the women gleam in the glad sunshine!

But the practise of pairing is carried to a degree of perfection in Scotland that I have not noticed elsewhere. Surely it is a great economic scheme! It is like that invention of a Connecticut man, which utilizes the ebb and flow of the ocean-tides to turn a gristmill.

And it seems queer that no one has ever attempted to utilize the waste of dynamic force involved in the maintenance of the Company Sofa.

In Ayrshire, I have started out with a haying party of twenty—ten men and ten women—at six o'clock in the morning and worked until six at night. I never worked so hard, nor did so much. All day long there was a fire of jokes and jolly gibes, interspersed with song, while beneath all ran a gentle hum of confidential interchange of thought. The man who owned the field was there to direct our efforts and urge us on in well-doing by merry raillery, threat, and joyous rivalry.

The point I make is this—we did the work. Take heed, ye Captains of Industry, and note this truth, that where men and women work together under right influences, much good is accomplished, and the work is pleasurable. Of course there are vinegar-faced philosophers who say that the Scotch custom of pairing young men and maidens in the hayfield is not without its effect on esoterics, also on vital statistics; and I 'm willing to admit there may be danger in the scheme. But life is a dangerous business anyway—few indeed get out of it alive!

ROBERT BURNS

BURNS succeeded in his love-making and succeeded in poetry, but at everything else he was a failure. He failed as a farmer, a father, a friend, in society, as a husband, and in business. ¶ From his twenty-third year his days were passed in sinning and repenting.

Poetry and love-making should be carried on with caution: they form a terrific tax on life's forces. Most poets die young, not because the gods especially love them, but because life is a bank-account, and to wipe out your balance is to have your checks protested. The excesses of youth are drafts payable at maturity. Chatterton dead at eighteen, Keats at twenty-six, Shelley at thirty-three, Byron at thirty-six, Poe at forty, and Burns at thirty-seven, are the rule. When drafts made by the men mentioned became due, there was no balance to their credit and Charon beckoned. ¶ Most life-insurance companies now ask the applicant this question, "Do you write poetry to excess?" Shakespeare, to be sure, clung to life until he was fifty-three, but this seems to be the limit. Dickens and Thackeray, their candles well burned out, also died under sixty. Of course, I know that Browning, Tennyson, Morris and Bryant lived to a fair old age, but this was on borrowed time, for in the early life of each there was a hiatus of from ten to eighteen years, when the men never wrote a line, nor touched a drop of anything, bravely eschewing all honey from Hymettus.

Then the four men last named were all happily married, and married life is favorable to longevity, but not to poetry. As a rule only single men, or those unhappily mated, make love and write poetry. Men happily married make money, cultivate content, and evolve an aldermanic front; but love and poetry are symptoms of unrest. Thus is Emerson's proposition partially proven, that in life all things are bought and must be paid for with a price —even success and happiness.

ROBERT BURNS

BURNS once explained to Doctor Moore that the first fine, careless rapture of his song was awakened into being when he was sixteen years old, by " a bonnie sweet sonsie lass " whom we now know as " Handsome Nell." Her other name to us is vapor, and history is silent as to her life-pilgrimage. Whether she lived to realize that she had first given voice to one of the great singers of earth—of this we are also ignorant. She was one year younger than Burns, and little more than a child when she and Bobby lagged behind the troop of tired haymakers, and walked home, hand in hand, in the gloaming. Here is one of the stanzas addressed to " Handsome Nell ":

> " She dresses all so clean and neat,
> Both decent and genteel,
> And then there 's something in her gait
> Makes any dress look weel."

And how could Nell then ever guess why her cheeks burned scarlet, and why she was so sorry when haying-time was over? She was sweet, innocent, artless, and their love was very natural, tender, innocent. It 's a pity that all loves can not remain in just that idyllic, milkmaid stage, where the girls and boys awaken in the early morning with the birds, and hasten forth barefoot across the dewy fields to find the cows. But love never tarries. Love is progressive; it can not stand still. I have heard of the " passiveness " of woman's

love, but the passive woman is only one who does not love—she merely consents to have affection lavished upon her. When I hear of a passive woman, I always think of the befuddled sailor who once saw one of those dummy dress-frames, all duly clothed in flaming bombazine (I think it was bombazine) in front of a clothing establishment. The sailor, mistaking the dummy for a near and dear lady friend, embraced the wire apparatus and imprinted a resounding smack on the chaste plaster-of-Paris cheek. Meeting the sure-enough lady shortly after, he upbraided her for her cold passivity on the occasion named.

A passive woman—one who consents to be loved—should seek occupation among those worthy firms who warrant a fit in ready-made gowns, or money refunded.

¶ Love is progressive—it hastens onward like the brook hurrying to the sea. They say that love is blind: love may be short-sighted, or inclined to strabismus, or may see things out of their true proportion, magnifying pleasant little ways into seraphic virtues, but love is not really blind—the bandage is never so tight but that it can peep. The only kind of love that is really blind and deaf is Platonic love. Platonic love has n't the slightest idea where it is going, and so there are surprises and shocks in store for it. The other kind, with eyes wide open, is better. I know a man who has tried both. Love is progressive. All things that live should progress. To stand still is to retreat, and

to retreat is death. Love dies, of course. All things die, or become something else. And often they become something else by dying. Behold the eternal Paradox! The love that evolves into a higher form is the better kind. Nature is intent on evolution, yet of the myriads of spores that cover earth, most of them are doomed to death; and of the countless rays sent out by the sun, the number that fall athwart this planet are infinitesimal. Edward Carpenter calls attention to the fact that disappointed love—that is, love that is " lost " —often affects the individual for the highest good. But the real fact is, nothing is ever lost. Love in its essence is a spiritual emotion, and its office seems to be an interchange of thought and feeling; but often thwarted in its object, it becomes general, transforms itself into sympathy, and embracing a world, goes out to and blesses all mankind.

Very, very rare is the couple that has the sense and poise to allow passion just enough mulberry-leaves, so it will spin a beautiful silken thread, out of which a Jacob's ladder can be constructed, reaching to the Infinite. Most lovers in the end wear love to a fringe, and there remains no ladder with angels ascending and descending—not even a dream of a ladder. Instead of the silken ladder on which one can mount to Heaven, there is usually a dark, dank road to Nowhere, over which is thrown a package of letters and trinkets, all fastened round with a white ribbon, tied in a lover's

knot. The many loves of Robert Burns all ended in a black jumping-off place, and before he had reached high noon, he tossed over the last bundle of white-ribboned missives and tumbled in after them. The life of Burns is a tragedy, through which are interspersed sparkling scenes of gaiety, as if to retrieve the depth of bitterness that would otherwise be unbearable. Go ask Mary Morison, Highland Mary, Agnes McLehose, Betty Alison, and Jean Armour!

ROBERT BURNS

THE poems of Robert Burns fall easily into four divisions ☙ ☙
First, those written while he was warmly wooing the object of his affection.
Second, those written after he had won her.
Third, those written when he had failed to win her ☙
Fourth, those written when he felt it his duty to write, and really had nothing to say.
The first-named were written because he could not help it, and are, for the most part, rarely excellent. They are joyous, rapturous, sprightly, dancing, and filled with references to sky, clouds, trees, fruit, grain, birds and flowers. Birds and flowers, by the way, are peculiarly lovers' properties. The song and the plumage of birds, and the color and perfume of flowers are all distinctly sex manifestations. Robert Burns sang his songs just as the bird wings and sings, and for the same reason. Sex holds first place in the thought of Nature; and sex in the minds of men and women holds a much larger place than most of us are willing to admit. All religious emotion and all art are born of the sex instinct.
¶ Burns' poems of the second variety, written after he had won her, are touched with religious emotion, or filled with vain regret and deep remorse, as the case may be, all owing to the quality and kind of success achieved, and the influence of the Dog-Star.
Burns wrote several deeply religious poems. Now, men are very seldom really religious and contrite,

except after an excess. Following a debauch a man signs the pledge, vows chastity, writes fervently of asceticism and the need of living in the spirit and not in the senses. Good pictures show best on a dark background. Men talk most about things they do not possess. ¶ "The Cotter's Saturday Night," perhaps the most quoted of any of Burns' poems, is plainly the result of a terrible tip to t' other side. Bobby had gone so far in the direction of Venusburg that he resolved on getting back, and living thereafter a staid and proper life ☙ In order to reform you must have an ideal, and the ideal of Burns, on the occasion of having exhausted all capacity for sin, is embodied in the "Saturday Night." It is all a beautiful dream. The real Scottish cotter is quite another kind of person. The religion of the live cotter is well seasoned with fear, malevolence and absurd dogmatism. The amount of love, patience, excellence and priggishness shown in "The Cotter's Saturday Night" never existed, except in a poet's imagination. In stanza Number Ten of that particular poem is a bit of unconscious autobiography that might as well ha' been omitted; but in letting it stand, Burns was loyal to the thought that surged through his brain. ¶ People who are not scientific in their speech often speak of the birds as being happy. My opinion is that birds are not any more happy than men—probably not as much so. Many birds, like the English sparrow and the blue jay, quarrel all day long. Come to think of it, I

believe that man is happier than the birds. He has a sense of remorse, and this suggests reformation, and from the idea of reformation comes the picturing of an ideal. This exercise of the imagination is pleasure, for indeed there is a certain satisfaction in every form of exercise of the faculties. There is a certain pleasure in pain: for pain is never all pain. And sin surely is not wholly bad, if through it we pass into a higher life—the life of the spirit.

Anything is better than the Dead Sea of neutral nothingness, wherein a man merely avoids sin by doing nothing and being nothing. The stirring of the imagination by sorrow for sin, sometimes causes the soul to wing a far-reaching upward flight.

Asceticism is often only a form of sensuality: the man finds satisfaction in overcoming the flesh. And wherever you find asceticism you find potential passion—a smoldering volcano held in check by a devotion to duty; and a gratification is oft found in fidelity.

The moral and religious poems of Burns were written in a desire to work off a fit of depression, and make amends for folly. They are sincere and often very excellent. Great preachers have often been great sinners, and the sermons that have moved men most are often a direct recoil from sin on the part of the preacher. Remorse finds play in preaching repentance. When a man talks much about a virtue, be sure that he is clutching for it. Temperance fanatics are men with a taste for

strong drink, trying hard to keep sober. The moral and religious poems of Robert Burns are not equal to his love-songs. The love-songs are free, natural, untrammeled and unrestrained; while his religious poems have a vein of rotten warp running through them in the way of affectation and pretense. From this I infer that sin is natural, and remorse partially so. In Burns' moral poems the author tries to win back the favor of respectable people, which he had forfeited. In them there is a violence of direction; and all violence of direction—all endeavors to please and placate certain people—is fatal to an artist. You must work to please only yourself.

Work to please yourself and you develop and strengthen the artistic conscience. Cling to that and it shall be your mentor in times of doubt: you need no other. There are writers who would scorn to write a muddy line, and would hate themselves for a year and a day should they dilute their honest thought with the platitudes of the fear-ridden. Be yourself and speak your mind today, though it contradict all you have said before. And above all, in art, work to please yourself—that Other Self that stands over and behind you, looking over your shoulder, watching your every act, word and deed—knowing your every thought. Michelangelo would not paint a picture on order. " I have a critic who is more exacting than you," said Meissonier—" it is my Other Self."

Rosa Bonheur painted pictures just to please her Other Self, and never gave a thought to any one else, nor wanted to think of any one else, and having painted to please herself, she made her appeal to the great Common Heart of humanity—the tender, the noble, the receptive, the earnest, the sympathetic, the lovable. That is why Rosa Bonheur stands first among women artists of all time: she worked to please her Other Self.

That is the reason Rembrandt, who lived at the same time Shakespeare lived, is today without a rival in portraiture. He had the courage to make an enemy. When at work he never thought of any one but his Other Self, and so he infused soul into every canvas. The limpid eyes look down into yours from the walls and tell of love, pity, earnestness and deep sincerity. Man, like Deity, creates in his own image, and when he portrays some one else, he pictures himself, too—this provided his work is Art. If it is but an imitation of something seen somewhere, or done by some one else, to please a patron with money, no breath of life has been breathed into its nostrils, and it is nothing, save possibly dead perfection—no more.

Is it easy to please your Other Self? Try it for a day. Begin tomorrow morning and say: "This day I will live as becomes a man. I will be filled with good-cheer and courage. I will do what is right; I will work for the highest; I will put soul into every hand-grasp,

every smile, every expression—into all my work. I will live to satisfy my Other Self."

Do you think it is easy? Try it for a day.

Robert Burns wrote some deathless lines—lines written out of the freshness of his heart, simply to please himself, with no furtive eye on Dumfries, Edinburgh, the Kirk, or the Unco Guid of Ayrshire; and these are the lines that have given him his place in the world of letters.

¶ The other day I was made glad by finding that John Burroughs, Poet and Prophet, says that the male thrush sings to please himself, out of pure delight; and pleasing himself, he pleases his mate. " The female," says Burroughs, " is always pleased with a male that is pleased with himself."

The various controversial poems (granting for argument's sake that controversy is poetic) were written when Burns was smarting under the sense of defeat. These show a sharp insight into the heart of things, and a lively wit, but are not sufficient foundation on which to build a reputation. Ali Baba can do as well. Considering the fact that twice as many people make pilgrimages to the grave of Burns as visit the dust of Shakespeare, and that his poems are on the shelves of every library, his name now needs no defense. The ores are very seldom found pure, and if even the work of Deity is composite, why should we be surprised that man, His creature, should express himself in a varying scale of excellence!

ROBERT BURNS

THERE was nothing of Jack Falstaff about Francis Schlatter, whose whitened bones were found amid the alkali dust of the desert, a few years ago—dead in an endeavor to do without meat and drink for forty days.

Schlatter purported, and believed, that he was the reincarnation of the Messiah. Letters were sent to him, addressed simply, " Jesus Christ, Denver, Colorado," and he walked up to the General-Delivery window and asked for them with a confidence, we are told, that relieved the postmaster of a grave responsibility.

Schlatter was no mere ordinary pretender, working on the superstitions of shallow-pated people. He lived up to his belief—took no money, avoided notoriety when he could; and the proof of his sincerity lies in the fact that he died a victim to it.

Herbert Spencer has said all about the Messianic Instinct that there is to say, save this—the Messianic Instinct first had its germ in the heart of a woman. Every woman dreams of the coming of the Ideal Man —the man who will give her protection, even to giving up his life for her, and vouchsafe peace to her soul. I am told by a noted Bishop of the Catholic Church that many women who become nuns are prompted to take their vows solely through the occasion of an unrequited love. They become the bride of the Church and find their highest joy in following the will of Christ. He is their only Spouse and Master.

The terms of endearment one hears at prayer-meetings, "Blessed Jesus," "Dear Jesus," "Loving Jesus," "Elder Brother," "Patient, gentle Jesus," etc., were first used by women in an ecstasy of religious transport. And the thought of Jesus as a loving, "personal Savior," would die from the face of the earth did not women keep it alive. The religious nature and the sex nature are closely akin: no psychologist can tell where the one ends and the other begins.

There may be wooden women in the world, and of these I will not speak, but every strong, pulsing, feeling, thinking woman goes through life, seeking the Ideal Man. Whether she is married or single, rich or poor, old or young, every new man she meets is interesting to her, because she feels in some mysterious way that possibly he is the One.

Of course, I know that every good man, too, seeks the Ideal Woman—but that deserves another chapter ☙ The only woman in whose heart there is not the live, warm, Messianic Instinct is the wooden woman, and the one who believes she has already found him. But this latter is holding an illusion that soon vanishes with possession.

That pale, low-voiced, gentle and insane man, Francis Schlatter, was followed at times by troops of women. These women believed in him and loved him—in different ways, of course, and with passion varying according to temperament and the domestic environment

already existing. To love deeply is a matter of propinquity and opportunity.

One woman, whom "The Healer" had cured of a lingering disease, loved this man with a wild, mad, absorbing passion. Chance gave her the opportunity. He came to her house, cold, hungry, homeless, sick. She fed him, warmed him, looked into his liquid eyes, sat at his feet and listened to his voice. She loved him—and partook of his every mental delusion.

This woman now waits and watches in her mountain home for his return. She knows the coyotes and buzzards picked the scant flesh from his starved frame, but she says: "He promised he would come back to me, and he will. I am waiting for him here."

This woman writes me long letters from her solitude, telling me of her hopes and plans. Just why all the cranks in the United States should write me letters, I do not know, but they do—perhaps there is a sort o' fellow-feeling. This woman may write letters to others, just as she does to me. Of this I do not know, but surely I would not thus make public the heart-tragedy told me in a private letter, were it not that the woman herself has printed a pamphlet, setting forth her faith and veiling only those things into which it is not our right to pry.

This Mary Magdalene believes her lover was the Chosen Son of God, and that the Father will reclothe the Son in a new garment of flesh and send him back

to his beloved. So she watches and waits, and dresses herself to receive him, and at night places a lighted lantern in the window to guide the way.

She watches and waits.

Other women wait for footsteps that will never come, and listen for a voice that will never be heard. All round the world there is a sisterhood of such. Some, being wise, lose themselves in loving service to others —in useful work. But this woman, out in the wilds of New Mexico, hugs her sorrow to her heart, and feeds her passion by recounting it, and watches away the leaden hours, crying aloud to all who will listen: "He is not dead—he is not dead! he will come back to me! He promised it—he will come back to me! This long, dreary waiting is only a test of my loyalty and love! I will be patient, for he will come back to me! He will come back to me!"

This world would be a sorry place if most men conducted their lives on the Robert Burns plan. Burns was affectionate, tender, generous and kind; but he was not wise. He never saw the future, nor did he know that life is a sequence, and that if you do this, it is pretty sure to lead to that. His loves were largely of the earth.

Excess was a part of his wayward, undisciplined nature; and that constant tendency to put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains, bound him at last, hand and foot. His old age could never have been

frosty, but kindly—it would have been babbling, irritable, senile, sickening. Death was kind and reaped him young. Sex was the rock on which Robert Burns split. He seemed to regard pleasure-seeking as the prime end of life, and in this he was not so very far removed from the prevalent " civilized " society notion of marriage. But it is a phantasmal idea, and makes a mock of marriage, serving the satirist his excuse.

To a great degree the race is yet barbaric, and as a people we fail utterly to touch the hem of the garment of Divinity. We have been mired in the superstition that sex is unclean, and therefore honesty and free expression in love matters have been tabued.

But the day will yet dawn when we will see that it takes two to generate thought; that there is the male man and the female man, and only where these two walk together hand in hand is there a perfect sanity and a perfect physical, moral and spiritual health.

We reach infinity through the love of one, and loving this one, we are in love with all. And this condition of mutual sympathy, trust, reverence, forbearance and gentleness that can exist between a man and a woman, gives the only hint of Heaven that mortals ever know. From the love of man for woman we guess the love of God, just as the scientist from a single bone constructs the skeleton—aye! and then clothes it with a complete garment. ¶ In their love-affairs women are seldom wise, or men just. How should we expect them to be when but

yesterday woman was a chattel and man a slave-owner? Woman won by diplomacy—that is to say, by trickery and untruth, and man had his way through force, and neither is quite willing to disarm. An amalgamated personality is the rare exception, because neither Church, State nor Society yet fully recognizes the fact that spiritual comradeship and the marriage of the mind constitute the only Divine mating. Doctor Blacklock once said that Robert Burns had eyes like the Christ. Women who looked into those wide-open, generous orbs lost their hearts in the liquid depths ☙ In the natures of Robert Burns and Francis Schlatter there was little in common; but their experiences were alike in this: they were beloved by women. Behind him Burns left a train of weeping women—a trail of broken hearts. And I can never think of him except as a mere youth—" Bobby Burns "—one who never came into man's estate. In all his love-making he never seemed really to benefit any woman, nor did he avail himself of the many mental and spiritual excellencies of woman's nature, absorbing them into his own. He only played a devil's tattoo upon her emotions.

If Burns knew anything of the beauty and inspiration of a high and holy friendship between a thinking man and a thinking woman, with mutual aims, ideals and ambitions, he never disclosed it. The love of a man for a maid, or a maid for a man, can never last, unless these two mutually love a third something. Then, as

they are traveling the same way, they may move forward hand in hand, mutually sustained. The marriage of the mind is the only compact that endures. I love you because you love the things that I love. That man alone is great who utilizes the blessings that God provides; and of these blessings no gift equals the gentle, trusting companionship of a good woman.

So, having written thus far, I find that already I have reached the limit of my allotted space.

In closing, it may not be amiss for me to state that Robert Burns was an Irish poet whose parents happened to be Scotch. He was born in Ayrshire in Seventeen Hundred Fifty-nine. He died in Seventeen Hundred Ninety-six, and was buried at Dumfries by the "gentleman volunteers," in spite of his last solemn words—"Don't let the Awkward Squad fire over my grave!" ¶ His mother survived him thirty-eight years, passing out in Eighteen Hundred Thirty-four. Burns left four sons, each of whom was often pointed out as the son of his father—but none of them was.

This is all I think of, at present, concerning Robert Burns ℵ For further facts I must refer the Gentle Reader to the "Encyclopedia Britannica," a compilation that I cheerfully recommend, it having been vouched for to me by a dear friend, a clergyman of East Aurora, who, the past year, perused the entire work, from A to Z, reading five hours a day: and therefore is competent to speak.



JOHN MILTON

JOHN MILTON

Thus with the year
Seasons return; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me; from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather thou, Celestial Light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

—*Paradise Lost: Book III*

JOHN MILTON



HAKESPEARE and Milton lived at the same time, though the difference in their ages was such that we may not speak of them as contemporaries. John Milton was eight years old when William Shakespeare died. The Miltons lived in Bread Street, and out of the back garret-window of their house could catch a glimpse of the Globe Theater

The father of John Milton might have known Shakespeare—might have dined with him at the "Mermaid," played skittles with him on Hampstead Heath, fished with him from the same boat in the river at Richmond; and then John Milton, the lawyer, might have discreetly schemed for passes to the " Globe " and gone with his boy John, Junior, to see " As You Like It " played, with the Master himself in the role of old Adam.

Bread Street was just off Cheapside, where the Mermaid Tavern stood, and where Beaumont, Fletcher, Ben Jonson and other roysterers often lingered and made the midnight echo with their mirth. In all probability, John Milton, Senior, father of John Milton, Junior, knew Shakespeare well. But the Miltons owned their home; were rich, influential, eminently respectable; attended Saint Giles' Church, and really did n't care

to cultivate the society of play-actors who kept bad hours, slept in the theater, and had meal-tickets at half a dozen taverns.

There were six children born into the Milton family, three of whom died in infancy. Of the survivors, the eldest was Anne, the second John, the third Christopher. ¶ Anne was strong, robust and hearty; John was slender, pale, with dreamy, dark gray eyes and a head too big for his body; Christopher was so-so. And, in passing, it is well to explain, once for all, that Christopher made his way straight to the front in life, taking up his father's business and being appointed a Court Officer. Thence he was promoted to the Woolsack, became rich, cultivated a double chin, was knighted, and passed out full of honors. The chief worriment and source of shame in the life of Sir Christopher Milton came from the unseemly conduct of his brother John, who was much given to producing political and theological pamphlets. And once in desperation Sir Christopher Milton requested John Milton to change his family name, that the tribe of Milton might be saved the disgrace of having in it " a traducer of the State, an enemy of the King, and a falsifier of Truth." Sir Christopher Milton was an excellent and worthy man, and I must apologize for not giving him more attention at this time; but lack of space forbids.

Sickly boys who are wise beyond their years are ever the pets of big sisters, and the object of loving, jealous,

zealous care on the part of their mothers. John Milton talked like an oracle while yet a child, and one biographer records that even as a babe he sometimes mildly reproved his parents for levity.

He was a precocious child, and have we not been told that precocity does not fulfill its promises? But this boy was an exception. He was incarnated into a family that prized music, poetry, philosophy, and yet held fast to the Christian faith. His father set psalms to music, his sister wrote madrigals, and his mother played sweet strains on a harp to waken him at morningtide. The entire household united in a devotion to poetry and art. Possibly this atmosphere of high thinking was too rarefied for real comfort—the gravity of the situation being sustained only by a stern effort.

But no matter—father, mother and sister joined hands to make the pale, handsome boy a prodigy of learning: one that would surprise the world and leave his impress on the time.

And they succeeded.

Of the three Milton children that passed away in childhood, I can not but think that they succumbed to overtraining, being crammed quite after the German custom of stuffing geese so as to produce that delicious diseased tidbit known to gourmets as pate de foies gras. John Milton stood the cramming process like a true hero. His parents set him apart for the Church—therefore he must be learned in books, familiar with languages,

versed in theories. They desired that he should have knowledge, which they did not know is quite a different thing from wisdom.

So the boy had a private tutor in Greek and Latin at nine years of age, and even then began to write verse. At ten years of age his father had the lad's portrait painted by that rare and thrifty Dutchman, Cornelius Jansen. We have this picture now, and it reveals the pale, grave, winsome face with the flowing curls that we so easily recognize.

No expense or pains were spared in the boy's education. The time was divided up for him as the hours are for a soldier. One tutor after another took him in hand during the day; but the change of study and a glad respite of an hour in the morning and the same in the afternoon, for music, bore him up.

He was the pride of his parents, the delight of his tutors

Three years were spent at Saint Paul's School; then he was sent to Cambridge. From there he wrote to his mother, "I am penetrating into the inmost recesses of the Muses; climbing high Olympus, visiting the green pastures of Parnassus, and drinking deep from Pierian Springs."

This is terrible language for a child of fourteen. A boy who should talk like that now would be regarded with anxious concern by his loving parents. The present age is incredulous of the Infant Phenomenon. And no

fond parent must for a moment imagine that by following the system laid out for the education of John Milton can a John Milton be produced. The Miltonian curriculum, if used today, would be sufficient ground for action on the part of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

But John Milton, though but a weak-eyed boy with a chronic headache, had a deal of whipcord fiber in his make-up. He stood the test and grubbed at his books every night until the clock tolled twelve. He was born at a peculiar time, being a child of the Reformation married to the Renaissance. The toughness and grimness of Calvin were united in him with the tenderness of Erasmus. From out of the Universal Energy, of which we are particles, he had called into his being qualities so diverse that they seemed never to have been before or since united in one person.

He remained at Cambridge seven years. The beauty of his countenance had increased so that he was as one set apart. His finely chiseled features, framed in their flowing curls, challenged the admiration of every person he met. A writer of the time described him as " a grave and sober person, but one not wholly ignorant of his own parts."

There is a sly touch in this sentence that sheds light upon " The Lady of Christ's." John Milton was a bit of a poseur, as Schopenhauer declares all great men are and ever have been. With the masterly mind goes

a touch of the fakir or charlatan. Milton knew his power—he gloried in this bright blade of the intellect. He was handsome—and he knew it. And yet we will not cavil at his velvet coats, or laces, or the golden chain that adorned his slender, shapely person. These things were only the transient, springtime adornments that passion puts forth.

And yet I see that one writer mentions the chaste and ascetic quality of Milton's early life as proof of a cold and measured nature. Seemingly the writer does not know that intense feeling often finds a gratification in asceticism, and that vows of chastity are proof of passion. There are many ways of working off one's surplus energy—Milton was married to his work. He traversed the vast fields of Classic Literature, read in the original from Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, French, Spanish, Latin and Italian. He delved into abstruse mathematics, studied music as a science, and labored at theology. In fact, he came to know so much of all religions that he had faith in none. He seemed to view religion in the cold, calculating light of a syllogistic problem—not as a warm, pulsing motive in life. His real religion was music, a fact he once frankly acknowledged.

On the pinions of music he was carried out and away beyond the boundaries of time and space, and there he found that rest for his soul, without which he would have sunk to earth and been covered by the kindly, drifting leaves of oblivion.

For some, the secrets of music, the wonder of love, and the misty, undefined prayers of the soul constitute true religion. When you place a creed in a crucible and afterward study the particles on a slide encased in balsam, you are apt to get a residuum or something —a something that does not satisfy the heart.

Milton got well acquainted with theology. It was interesting, but not what he had supposed. He came to regard the Church as a useful part of the Government —divine, of course, as all good things are divine. But to become a priest and play a part—he would not do it. He was honest—stubbornly honest.

Seven years he had been at Cambridge, and now that he was just ready to step into a " living "—right in the line of promotion of which his beauty and intellect tokened a sure presage—he balked.

It was a great blow to his parents. His mother pleaded; his father threatened; but they soon perceived that this son they had brought forth had a will stronger than theirs. Their fond dreams of his preferment—the handsome face of their boy above an oaken pulpit, with thousands feeding on his words, the public honors, and all that—faded away into tears and misty nothingness. But parenthood is doomed to disappointment—it does not endure long enough to see the end. Youth is so headstrong and wilful: it will not learn from the experience of others.

And all these years of preparation and expense! Better

had he died and been laid to rest with the three now in the churchyard.

Before Milton had served his seven years' apprenticeship at Cambridge, his parents moved to the village of Horton—twenty miles out of London, Windsor way. ¶ The village of Horton has not changed much with the years, and a tramp across the fields from Eton by way of Burnham Beeches and Stoke Pogis, where Gray wrote " The Elegy," is quite worth while. It is a land of lazy woods, and winding streams and hedgerows melodious with birds. One treads on storied ground, and if you wish you can recline beneath gnarled old oaks where Milton mused and scribbled, and wrote the first draft of " L' Allegro " and " Il Penseroso."

Milton loitered here at Horton for six years, and in that time produced just six poems.

He was thirty-two years of age, and had never earned a sixpence. But what booted it! His father and mother's home was his: they gladly supplied his every want; and his mother, especially, was ever his kindly critic and most intimate friend. His days were spent in study, dreams, lonely walks across green fields, and homecomings when, with his mother's hand in his, he would talk or recite to her in order to clarify the thought that pressed upon him. Very calm, very peaceful and very beautiful were those days. " The pensive attitude of mind brings the best result—not the active," he used to say. It was then he wrote to his old friend,

Diodati: "You asked what I am about—what I am thinking of? Why, with God's help, I am thinking of immortality. Forgive the word, it is for your ear alone —I am pluming my wings for flight."

The good mother had misty, prophetic visions of what this flight might be, and had ceased to counsel her son against the sin of idleness. But she did not live to see her prophecies confirmed, for in this time of peace and love, when the vibrant air was filled with hope, she passed Beyond.

Long years after, John Milton exclaimed, "Oh! Why could she not have lived to know!" And the poignant grief of this son, then a man in years (with his thirtieth birthday well behind), turned on the thought that he had disappointed Her—the mother who had loved him into being.

MILTON'S woes began with his marriage—they have given rise to nearly as much discussion as his poetry. In his " Defensio Secunda," he tells, with a touch of pride, of the absolute innocency that continued until his thirty-fifth year. When we consider how his combined innocence and ignorance plunged him into a sudden marriage with a bit of pink-and-white protoplasm, aged seventeen, we can not but regret that he had not devoted a little of his valuable time to a study of femininity. And in some way we think of Thackeray, when he was being shown the marvelous works of a certain amateur artist. " Look at that! look at that! " cried the zealous guide, " and he never had a lesson in art in his life! " Thackeray adjusted his glasses, looked at the picture carefully, sighed and said, "What a pity he did n't have just a little good instruction! "

Milton the student, versed in abstractions and full of learned lore, went up the Thames seeking a little needed rest. Five miles from Oxford lived an ebb-tide aristocratic family by the name of Powell. Milton had long known this family, and, it seems, decided to tarry with them a day or so. Just why he sought their company no one ever knew, and Milton was too proud to tell. The brown thrush, rival of the lark and mocking-bird, seldom seeks the society of the blue jay. But it did this time. The Powells were a roaring, riotous, roystering, fox-hunting, genteel, but reduced family,

on the eve of bankruptcy, with marriageable daughters. ¶ The executive functions of love-making are best carried on by shallow people; so mediocre women often show rare skill in courtship, and sometimes succeed in bagging big game. But surely Mary Powell had no conception of the greatness of Milton's intellect —she only knew that he was handsome, and her parents said he was rich.

There was feasting and mirth when Milton arrived back in town accompanied by his bride and various of her kinsmen. In all marriage festivals there is something pathetically absurd, and I never see a sidewalk awning spread without thinking of the one erected for John Milton and Mary Powell, who were led through it by an Erebus that was not only blind, but stone-deaf. ¶ John Milton was an ascetic, and lived in a realm of reverie and dreams; his wife had a strong bias toward the voluptuous, reveling in a world of sense, and demanding attention as her right. Milton began diving into his theories and books, and forgot the poor child who had no abstract world into which to withdraw. Suddenly bereft of the gay companionship that her father's house supplied, she felt herself aggrieved, alone; and tears of vexation and homesickness began to stream down her pretty cheeks.

When summoned into her husband's presence she had nothing to say, and Milton, the theorist, discovered that what he had mistaken for the natural reticence

and bashfulness of maidenhood was mere inanity and lack of ideas. But the loneliness of the poor country girl, shut up in a student's den, is a deal more touching than the scholar's wail about " the silent and insensate " wife. The girl was being deprived of the rollicking freedom to which she had been used, but the great man was waking the echoes with his wail for a companionship he had never known.

Yet the girl was shrewd. All women are shrewd, I am told, and some are wise and some are not; and many women there be who consider finesse an improvement on frankness. At the end of a month, Milton's wife contrived to have her parents send for her to return home on a visit that was to last only until come Michaelmas. But Michaelmas arrived and the young bride refused to return, sending back saucy answers to the great author of " Il Penseroso."

In the meantime Milton wrote pamphlets urging that divorce should be granted on the grounds of incompatibility, and pronouncing as inhuman the laws that gave freedom from marital woes on no less ignoble grounds than that a man should violate his honor ✍ There is pretty good evidence that a part of Milton's argument on the subject of divorce was written out while his wife was under his roof. This reveals a slight lack of delicacy as well as the author's habit to make copy out of his private griefs; but it must be granted that Milton goes to the very bottom of the subject,

even to stating the fact that those happily married have neither pity nor patience with those mismated. " If you want sympathy," he says, " you must go to those who are regarded as not respectable." Any man who writes on philosophy can find his every cue in Plato, and he who discusses divorce from a radical standpoint can find himself anticipated by Milton in the Seventeenth Century. Every view is taken, even down to the suggestion of a probationary marriage, which Milton thought might come about when civilization had ceased to crawl and begun to walk.

One seeks in vain to learn if the unhappy wife of Milton ever read her husband's bitter tracts. It is probable she never did, and would not have comprehended their import if she had; and it is still more likely that she never came to realize that she was wedded to the greatest man of the age. A truce was patched up, on the bankruptcy of her father, and she came back penitent, and was taken into favor. Not only did she come back, but she brought her family; and the ravenous Royalists consumed the substance of the spiritual and ascetic Puritan.

Had Milton then died, it is probable that the gladsome widow would have been consoled and married again very shortly, just as did the widows of Van Dyck and Rubens—not knowing that to have been the wife of a king was honor enough for one woman.

But after fifteen years of domestic " neglect," during

which she doubtless benefited her husband by stirring in him a noble discontent, she passed from earth; and it was left for John Milton to repeat twice more his marital venture, with a similar result. And in this, Fate sends back a fact that leers like Mephistopheles, by way of answer to Milton's pamphlets on divorce: Why should the State grant a divorce, when great men refuse to learn by experience, and, given the opportunity, only repeat the blunders they have already made? ☙

JOHN MILTON

GOD in His goodness has in certain instances sent great men angels of light for assistants—mates who could comprehend and sympathize with their ideals. But it is expecting too much to suppose that Nature can look out for such a trifle as that the right man should marry the right woman. Nature possibly never considered a time-contract, and she is a careless jade, anyway. She moves blindly along with never a thought for the individual.

Audubon the naturalist records that one-third of all birds hatched tumble out of the nest before they can fly, and once on the ground the parent birds are unable either to warm, feed or protect them.

Read the lives of the Great Men who have lived during the past three thousand years, and listen closely, and you will hear the wild wail of neglected and unappreciated wives. A woman can forgive a beating, but to be forgotten—never. She hates, by instinct, an austere and self-contained character. Dignity and pride repel her; preoccupation keeps her aloof; concentration on an idea is unforgivable.

The wife of Tolstoy seeking to have her husband adjudged insane is not a rare instance in the lives of thinkers. To think thoughts that are different from the thoughts one's neighbors think is surely good reason why the man should be looked after. Recently we have had evidence that the wife of Victor Hugo regarded the author of " Les Miserables " with suspicion, and at

one time actually made preparations to let him enjoy his exile alone—she would go back to Paris and enjoy life as every one should. At Guernsey there was no society!

¶ When Isaac Newton called upon his ladylove and in a fit of abstraction, looking about for a utensil to push the tobacco down in his pipe, chanced upon the lady's little finger, the law of gravitation was abrogated at once, and Newton and his pipe were sent, like nebulæ whirling into space.

When the Great Inventor, absorbed in a problem as to Electricity (that thing which to us is only a name and of which we know nothing), forgets home, wife, child, supper; and midnight finds him in his laboratory, where he has been since sunrise—just imagine, if you please, the shrill greeting that is in cold storage for him when he stumbles home, haggard and worn, at dawn. How can he explain why he did this thing and answer the questions as to who was there, and what good it all did anyway!

Thought is a torture, and requires such a concentration of energy that there is nothing left for the soft courtesies of marriage. The day is fleeting, and the night cometh when no man can work. The hot impulse to grasp and materialize the dream ere it fades, is strong upon the man.

Of course he is selfish—he sacrifices everything, as Palissy did when fuel was short and the clay just at the turning-point. Yes, the artist is selfish: he sacrifices

his wife and society, and himself, too, to get the work done. Four-o'clocks, mealtime, bedtime, and all the household system as to pink teas, calls and etiquette, stand for naught. And down the corridors of Time comes to us the shrill wail of neglected wives, and the crash of broken hearts echoes like the sound of a painter falling through a skylight. All this is the price of achievement.

JOHN MILTON

 AKING a little look backward into Milton's life, we find that until his thirty-third year he had not tasted of practical life at all. About that time his father, in a sort of desperation, packed him off to the Continent, in charge of a trusty attendant, who acted in the dual capacity of servant and friend. The letters he carried to influential men in Paris, Florence, Venice and Rome secured him the Speaker's eye, and his beauty and learning did the rest. His march was that of a conquering hero. In Paris he surprised the savants by addressing them in their own tongue, and reciting from their chief writers. This was repeated in Italy; and at Florence, as a sort of half-challenge for permission to occupy the highest seat, he was invited to read from his own compositions, which he did with such grace and power that thereafter all doors flew open at his touch.

Returning to England after an absence of fifteen months, he found his father's household broken up, and through bad investments, the family fortune sadly depleted. But travel had added cubits to his stature: the mixture with men had put him into possession of his own, and he now felt well able to cope with the world. He secured modest lodgings in Saint Bride's Churchyard, and set to work to make a living and a name by authorship. His head teemed with subjects for poems, but cash advances were not forthcoming from publishers, and, to bridge over, he tried tutoring.

¶ It was at this time that "Paradise Lost," the one matchless epic of English literature, was conceived. Rough jottings were made as to divisions and heads, and a few stanzas were written of the immortal poem that was not to be completed for a score of years.

The first volume of Milton's poems was issued in Sixteen Hundred Forty-five, when he was thirty-seven years of age. But before this he was known as the author of some pamphlets which had made political London reel. The writer was at once seen to be a man of remarkable learning and marvelous intellect, and the work secured Milton a few friends and divers enemies. From a man of leisure Milton had suddenly become a worker, whose every daylight hour was crammed with duties. His skill as a teacher brought him all the pupils he cared for, and he moved into better quarters in Aldersgate. He was immersed in his work, was making valuable acquaintances among literary people, was revered by his pupils, and the happiness was his of knowing that he was influential and independent. A fine intoxication comes to every brain-worker when the world acknowledges with tangible remittances that the product of his mind has a value on the Rialto. Such was Milton's joy in Sixteen Hundred Forty-three.

¶ The "Comus," "Il Penseroso," "L' Allegro" and "Lycidas" had established his place as a poet; and the power of his pen had been proven in sundry religious and political controversies.

In his household were two sons of his sister and several other pupils who had sought his tutorship. He was contented in his work, pleased and happy with the young friends who sat at his board, and in an hour or two snatched each day from toil, for music and reverie.

JOHN MILTON

 EIZE upon the moments as they fly, O John Milton, and hug them to your heart! Those were days of gold when your mother was your patient listener and friend. Her love enveloped you as an aura; and her voice, soft and low, upheld you when courage faltered. But these, too, are glorious days—days full of work, and health, and hope, and high endeavor. But these days of peace and freedom are the last you shall ever know. Even now they flee as a shadow and fade into mist! Gross stupidity, silent and insensate, sits waiting for you at the door; calumny is near; taunting hate comes riding fast!

The sympathy for which you yearn shall be yours only in dreams, and you shall be cheated of all the tenderness for which your heart prays. The love and gentleness which you associate with your mother, you ascribe in innocence and ignorance to all women; but Fate shall undeceive you, O John Milton, and make mock of all your high ideals. You dote on liberty, but liberty is not for you. You shall see the funeral of the Republic; the defamation of your honor; the proscription of all the sacred things you prize. Your companions shall not be of your own choosing, but shall be those who neither know nor value the sweet, subtle mintage of the mind. Around you mad riot shall surge, a hatred for liberty shall prevail—an enthusiasm for slavery. The glorious leaders of your Puritan faith shall be condemned and executed, hanged, cut down

from the gallows alive, and quartered amid the hoarse insults of the people they sought to serve; and you yourself shall be hunted like a wild beast. You shall see the prisons filled to overflowing with men and women whose only crime was their love for truth. And a libertine shall sit on the throne of the England that you love. These things you shall see with those mild, dark eyes, and then night, eternal night, shall settle down upon you; and for those idle orbs no day shall dawn nor starry night appear, nor face of man nor child shall be reflected there. Your sightlessness shall give those who owe you gratitude and love, opportunity to filch your gold; and, lastly, fire shall rob you of your books, and well-nigh all your treasures.

Like another Lear, your daughters shall neither esteem nor respect you, and the lines you dictate shall be to them but the idle vaporings of a mind diseased. Your acute ears shall hear these daughters express the wish that you were dead; and then in your blindness you will give yourself into the keeping of a woman as dull, inane and unfeeling as the foolish child you first chose as wife. But with it all your obstinacy shall constitute your power; and that beauty which was yours in youth shall be with you to the last. You shall feel all the torments of the damned and become inured to the scorching flames of hell! But, as recompense, the splendors of the Celestial Kingdom shall open upon your inward vision, and your soul shall

behold that which the eyes of earth have lost. Something great and proud shall go out from your presence to all the discerning ones who shall approach you; and your end shall be like the setting of the sun, bright, calm, poised and resplendent.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

LETTER TO CHESTERFIELD

* * * Seven years, my Lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms and was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Vergil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached the ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and can not enjoy it; till I am a solitary, and can not impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, should less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord.

Your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

—Sam Johnson



SAMUEL JOHNSON

SAMUEL JOHNSON



HE critics, I believe, have made a distinction between large men and great men.

Samuel Johnson was both.

He was massive in intellect, colossal in culture, prodigious in memory, weighed nigh three hundred pounds, and had prejudices to match. He was possessed of a giant's strength, and occasionally used it like a giant—for instance, when he felled an offending bookseller with a folio.

Johnson was most unfortunate in his biographer. In picturing the great writer, Boswell writes more entertainingly than Johnson ever did, and thereby overtops his subject. And when in reply to the intimation that Boswell was going to write his life, Johnson answered, " If I really thought he was, I would take his," he spoke a jest in earnest.

Walking along Market Street in the city of Saint Louis, with a friend, not long ago, my comrade suddenly stopped and excitedly pointed out a man across the way —" Look quick—there he goes! " exclaimed my friend, " that man with the derby and duster—see? That 's the husband of Mrs. Lease of Kansas! " And all I could say was, " God help him! "

Not but that Mrs. Lease is a most excellent and

amiable lady; but the idea of a man, made in the image of his Maker, being reduced to the social state of a drone-bee is most depressing.

Among that worthy class of people referred to somewhat ironically as "the reading public," Boswell is read, but Johnson never. And so sternly true is the fact that many critics, set on a hair-trigger, aver that were it not for Boswell no one would now know that a writer by the name of Johnson ever lived. Yet the fact is, Boswell ruined the literary reputation of Johnson by intimating that Johnson wrote Johnsonese; but that is a mistake.

Johnson never wrote Johnsonese. The piling up of reasons, the cumulation of argument—setting off epigram against epigram—that mark Johnson's literary style are its distinguishing features. He is profound, but always lucid. And lucidity is just what modern Johnsonese lacks. The word was coined by a man who had neither the patience to read Johnson nor the ability to comprehend him. Only sophomores, and private secretaries who write speeches for able Congressmen, write Johnsonese.

Quibblers possibly may arise and present Johnson's definition of network—"anything reticulated or decussated at equal distances with interstices between the intersections"—but with the quibbler we have no time to dally. Some people insist on having their literature illustrated, just as others refuse to attend

lectures that are not reinforced by a stereopticon. ¶ Johnson had a style that is stately, dignified, splendid. It moves from point to point with absolute precision, and in it there is seldom anything ambiguous, muddy, confused or uncertain. Get down a volume of "Lives of the Poets," and prove my point for yourself, by opening at any page. It was Boswell who set his own light, chatty and amusing gossip over against the wise, stately diction of Johnson, and allowed Goldsmith to say, "Dear Doctor, if you were to write a story about little fishes, you would make them talk like whales," and the mud ball has stuck. The average man is much more willing to take the wily Boswell's word for it than to read Johnson for himself.

The balanced power of Johnson's English can not fail to delight the student of letters who cares to interest himself in the matter of sentence-building. Johnson handles a thought with such ease! He makes you think of the circus "strong man" who tosses the cannon-ball, marked "weight 250 lbs." What if the balls are sometimes only wood painted black! Have we not been entertained? Read this specimen paragraph:

"Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by Nature upon few, and the labor of learning those sciences which may by continuous effort be obtained is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he

has upon the works of others; and he whom Nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of 'critic.'"

But the greatest literary light of his day has been thrown into the shadow by a man whom no one suspected of being able to write entertainingly. In the world of letters the great Cham exists only as a lesser luminary; just as the once-noted novelist, George Henry Lewes, is now known only as the husband of George Eliot ☙ ☙

And yet no one is so rash as to say that the name of Boswell would now be known were it not for Johnson. And conversely (or otherwise), if it were the proper place, I could show that were it not for George Henry Lewes we should never have had "Adam Bede" or "The Mill on the Floss."

Boswell wrote the best "Life" ever written. Nothing like it was ever written before; nothing to equal it has been written since. It has had hundreds of imitators, but no competitors. Matthew Arnold said that no man ever had so good a subject, but Arnold for the moment seemed to forget that Hawkins, a professional literary man, published his "Life of Johnson" long before Boswell's was sent to the printer—and who reads Hawkins? ☙ ☙

Surely Boswell had a great subject, and he rises to the level of his theme and makes the most of it. At times I have wondered if Boswell were not really a genius

so great and profound that he was willing to play the fool, as Edgar in " Lear " plays the maniac, and allow himself to be snubbed (in print) in order to make his telling point! Millionaires can well afford to wear ragged coats. Second-rate man Boswell may have been, as he himself so oft admits, yet as a biographer he stands first in the front rank. But suppose his extreme ignorance was only the domino disguising a cleverness so subtle that it was not discovered until after his death! And what if he smiles now, as from out of Elysium he looks and beholds how, as a writer, he has eclipsed old Ursa Major, and thus clipped the claws that were ready for any chance Scot who might pass that way!

John Hay has suggested that possibly the insight, piquancy and calm wisdom of Omar Khayyam are two-thirds essence of FitzGerald. If so, the joke is on Omar, not on FitzGerald.

A dozen of Johnson's contemporaries wrote about him, and all make him out a profound scholar, a deep philosopher, a facile writer. Boswell by his innocent quoting and recounting makes his conversation outstrip all of his other accomplishments. He reveals the man by the most skilful indirection, and by leaving his guard down, often allows the reader to score a point. And of all devices of writing folk, none is finer than to please the reader by allowing him to pat himself on the back.

If a writer is too clever he repels. Shakespeare avoids the difficulty, and proves himself the master by keeping

out of sight; Renan wins by a great show of modesty and deferential fairness; Boswell assumes an artlessness and ignorance that were really not parts of his nature. Every man who reads Boswell considers himself the superior of Boswell, and therefore is perfectly at home. It is not pleasant to be in the society of those who are much your superiors. Any man who sits in the company of Samuel Pepys for a half-hour feels a sort of half-patronizing pity for him, and therefore is happy, for to patronize is bliss.

If Boswell has reinforced fact with fiction, and given us art for truth, then his character of Samuel Johnson is the most vividly conceived and deeply etched in all the realm of books. But if he gives merely the simple facts, then Boswell is no less a genius, for he has omitted the irrelevant and inconsequential, and by playing off the excellent against the absurd, he has placed his subject among the few great wits who have ever lived—a man who wrote remarkably well, but talked infinitely better

SAMUEL JOHNSON

MONTAIGNE advises young men that if they will fall in love, why, to fall in love with women older than themselves. His argument is that a young and pretty woman makes such a demand on a man's time and attention that she is sure, eventually, to wear love to the warp. So the wise old Gascon suggests that it is the part of wisdom to give your affection to one who is both plain and elderly—one who is not suffering from a surfeit of love, and one whose head has not been turned by flattery. " Young women," says the philosopher, " demand attention as their right and often flout the giver; whereas old women are very grateful."

Whether Samuel Johnson, of Lichfield, ever read Montaigne or not is a question; but this we know, that when he was twenty-six he married the Widow Porter, aged forty-nine.

Assuming that Johnson had read Montaigne and was mindful of his advice, there were other excellent reasons why he did not link his fortunes with those of a young and pretty woman.

Johnson in his youth, as well as throughout life, was a Grind of the pure type. The Grind is a fixture, a few being found at every University, even unto this day. The present writer, once in a book of fiction, founded on fact, took occasion to refer to the genus Grind, with Samuel Johnson in mind, as follows: He is poor in purse, but great in frontal development.

He goes to school because he wishes to (no one ever "sent" a Grind to college). He has a sallow skin, a watery eye, a shambling gait, but he has the facts. His clothes are outgrown, his coat shiny, his linen a dull ecru, his hands clammy. He reads a book as he walks, and when he bumps into you, he always exculpates himself in Attic Greek.

This absent-mindedness and habit of reading on the street affords the Sport (another college type) great opportunity for the playing of pranks. It is very funny to walk along in front of a Grind who is reading as he walks, and then suddenly stop and stoop, and let the Grind fall over you; for the innocent Grind, thinking he has been at fault, is ever profuse in apologies.

Many years ago there was a Grind. A party of Sports saw him approaching, deeply immersed in his book. "Look you," quoth the chief of the Sports—"look you and observe him fall over me."

And they looked.

Onward blindly trudged the Grind, reading as he came. The Sport stepped ahead of him, stooped, and ——— one big foot of the Grind shot out and kicked him into the gutter. Then the Grind continued his walk and his reading without saying a word.

This incident is here recorded for the betterment of the Young, to show them that things are not always what they seem.

Samuel Johnson, I have said, was a Grind of the pure

type. He was so nearsighted that he fell over chairs in drawing-rooms, and so awkward that his long arms occasionally brushed the bric-a-brac from mantels. No lady's train was safe if he was in the room. At gatherings of young people, if Johnson appeared, his presence was at once the signal for mirth, of which he was, of course, the unconscious object.

Johnson's face was scarred by the King's Evil, which even the touch of Queen Anne had failed to cure. While a youth he talked aloud to himself—a privilege that should be granted only to those advanced in years. He would grunt out prayers and expletives at uncertain times, keep up a clucking sound with his tongue, sway his big body from side to side, and drum a tattoo upon his knee. Now and again would come a suppressed whistle, and then a low humming sound, backed up by a vacant non-compos-mentis smile.

Another odd whim of Johnson's was, that he would never pass a lamp-post without touching it, and would go back miles upon his way to repair an omission.

Surely great wit to madness is near allied.

This most strange young man was a boarder in the home of Mrs. Porter, when her husband was alive, and the husband and boarder had been fast friends—drawn together by a bookish bias.

Very naturally, when the husband passed away, the boarder sought to console the bereaved landlady, and the result was as usual. And when, long years after,

Johnson would solemnly explain that it was a pure love-match on both sides, the statement never failed to excite much needless and ill-suppressed merriment on the part of the listeners. In mimicking the endearments of Johnson and his " pretty creature "—so the admiring husband called her—Garrick many years later added to his artistic reputation.

Unlike most literary men, Johnson was domestic, and his marriage was one of the most happy events of his career. But to show that the philosophy of Montaigne is not infallible, and that all signs fail in dry weather, it may be stated that the bride proved by her conduct on her wedding-day that she had some relish of the saltness of time in her cosmos, despite her fifty summers and as many hard winters.

Said Johnson to Boswell, referring to the horseback-ride home after the wedding-ceremony: " Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did I observed her to be in tears."

SHORTLY after his marriage, Johnson opened a private school for boys. To operate a private school successfully implies a certain amount of skill in the management of parents; but Johnson's uncouth manners and needlessly blunt speech were appalling to those who had children who might possibly be given to imitation.

Only three pupils were secured, and but one of these received any benefit from the tutor; and this benefit came, according to the scholar, from the master's supplying an excellent object for ridicule.

This pupil's name was David Garrick.

The meeting with David Garrick was a pivotal point in the life of Johnson. Johnson's mental and spiritual existence flowed on, separate and apart from that of his wife. There was no meeting of the waters. His affection for her was most tender and constant, but in quality it seemed to differ but slightly from the sentiment he entertained toward " Hodge," his cat.

Hodge was fed on oysters that his owner could ill afford; and after Johnson had spent the little fortune that belonged to his wife, the lady was regaled on the best and choicest that his income, or credit, could secure. But if one of those lightning-flashes of wit ever escaped him in her direction, we do not know it. Garrick evidently was the first flint that tried his steel. The distinctions of teacher and scholar were soon lost between these two, and the lessons took the turn of a

fusillade of wit. They made comments on the authors they read, and comments on the people they met, and criticized each other with encaustic remarks that tested friendship to its extremest limit. And this continual skirmish that would have made sworn foes of common men in a day revealed to each that the other had the element of unexpectedness in his nature and was worth loving ☙ ☙

Humor and melancholy go hand in hand; both are born of an extreme sensitiveness, and the man who smiles at the trivial misfits of life realizes also that all men who tread the earth are living under a sentence of death, and that Fate has merely allowed them an indefinite, but limited, reprieve.

At the outset of Johnson's career, one can not but see that the companionship and nimble wit of Garrick saved his ponderous and melancholy mind from going into bankruptcy.

And now we find them: one twenty-eight, big, near-sighted, theoretical, blundering; and the other twenty-one, slight, active, graceful, practical. They were alike in this: they both loved books and were possessed of the eager, earnest, receptive mind. To possess the hospitable mind! For what greater blessing can one pray? ☙ ☙

And then they were alike in other respects—they were desperately poor; neither had an income; neither had a profession; both were ambitious. Johnson had written

a tragedy—" Irene "—and he had read it to Garrick several times, and Garrick said it was good and should make a hit. But Garrick did n't know much about tragedies—law was his bent—he had read law for two years, off and on. They would go to London and seize fortune by the scalp-lock. In London good lawyers were needed, and London was the only place for a playwright. ¶ They scraped together their pennies, borrowed a few more, got a single letter of introduction between them to some person of unknown influence, and started away, with the lacrimose blessings of the elderly bride, and of Davy's mother.

They must have been a queer sight when the stage let them down at the Strand—dusty, dirty, tired and scared by the babel of sounds and sights! And no doubt Johnson's enormous size saved them from sundry insults and divers taunts that otherwise might have come their way ❧ ❧

Those first few weeks in London were given to staring into shop-windows and wandering, open-mouthed, up and down. No one wanted the tragedy—the managers all sniffed at it. Little then did Davy dream, as they made their way from the office of one theater-manager to that of another, that he himself would some day own a theater and give the discarded play its first setting. And little did he think that he would yet be the foremost actor of his time, and his awkward mate the literary dictator of London. Oh! this game of life is a

great play! The blissful uncertainty of it all! The ambitions, plans, strivings, heartaches, mad desires and vain reaching out of empty arms! The tears, the bitter disappointments, the sleepless nights, the echoes of prayers unheard, and the hollow hopelessness of love turned to hate!

And then mayhap we do as Emerson did—go out into the woods, and all the trees say, "Why so hot, my little man?"

Garrick, disappointed and undone at the thought of defeat in his chosen profession, turned to commercial life and then to the theater. At his first stage appearance he trembled with diffidence and all but fled in fright. He persevered, for he could do nothing else. He arose step by step, and honors, wealth and fame were his. Love came to him: he wedded the woman of his choice. And after his death she survived for forty-three years. She lived one hundred years, lacking two. Garrick was born in Seventeen Hundred Sixteen; and his wife died in Eighteen Hundred Twenty-two, which seems to bring the times of Johnson pretty close home to us. Throughout her long life, she lived in the memory of the love that had been hers; cherishing and protecting, idolizing, as did Mary Shelley, the one name and that alone ✍ ✍

Johnson and Garrick thoroughly respected and admired each other, yet they often quarreled—they quarreled to the last. But when Davy had lain him down in his

last sleep, aged sixty-three, it was Johnson, aged seventy, who wrote his epitaph, introducing into it the deathless sentence * * * "by that stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

THREE months in London and Johnson succeeded in getting a place on the editorial staff of " The Gentleman's Magazine." Prosperity smiled, not exactly a broad grin; but the expression was something better than a stony, forbidding stare.

He made haste to go back to Lichfield after his " Letty," which name, by the way, is an improvement on Betty, Betsy or Tetsy—being baby-talk for Elizabeth.

They took modest lodgings in a third floor back, off Fleet Street, and Johnson began that life of struggle against debt, ridicule and unkind condition that was to continue for forty-seven years; never out of debt, never free from attacks of enemies; a life of wordy warfare and inky broadsides against cant, affectation and untruth—with the weapons of his dialectics always kept well burnished by constant use; hated and loved; jeered and praised; feared and idolized.

Coming out of his burrow one dark night, he encountered an old beggar-woman who importuned him for alms. He was brushing past her, when one of her exclamations caught his ear.

" Sir," said the woman, " I am an old struggler! "

" Madam," replied Johnson, " so am I! " And he gave her his last sixpence.

But life in London was cheap in those days—it is now if you know how to do it, or else have to. Johnson used to maintain that for thirty pounds a year one could

live like a gentleman, and as proof would quote an imaginary acquaintance who argued that ten pounds a year for clothes would keep a man in good appearance; a garret could be hired for eighteen pence a week, and if any one asked your address you could reply, " I am to be found in such a place." Threepence laid out at a coffeehouse would enable one to pass some hours a day in good company; dinner might be had for sixpence, and supper you could do without. On clean-shirt day you could go abroad and call on your lady friends. Among Johnson's first literary tasks in London was the work of reporting the debates in Parliament. In order that the best possible results might be obtained, he resorted to the rather unique, but not entirely original, method of not attending Parliament at all. Two or three young men would be sent to listen to the debates; they would make notes giving the general drift of the argument, and Johnson would write out the speech. His style was exactly suited to this kind of work, being eminently rhetorical. And as at the time no public record of proceedings was kept and Parliament did not allow the press the liberty it now possesses—all being as it were clouded in mysterious awe—these reports of debates were eagerly sought after. To evade the law, a fictitious name was given the speaker, or his initials used in such a way that the individual could be easily recognized by the reading public.

Some of Johnson's best work was done at this time,

and in several instances the speaker, not slow to appreciate a good thing, allowed the matter to be reissued as his own. Long years after, a certain man was once praising the speeches of Lord Chesterfield and was led on to make explanations. He did so, naming two speeches, one of which he zealously declared had the style of Cicero; the other that of Demosthenes. Johnson becalmed the speaker by agreeing with him as to the excellence of the speeches, and then adding, " I wrote them both."

The gruffness of Ursa Major should never be likened to that of the Sage of Chelsea. Carlyle vented his spleen on the nearest object, as irate gentlemen sometimes kick at the cat; but Johnson merely sparred for points. When Miss Monckton undertook to refute his statements as to the shallowness of Sterne by declaring that " Tristram Shandy " affected her to tears, Johnson rolled himself into contortions, made an exasperating grimace, and replied, " Why, dearest, that is because you are a dunce! " Afterward, when reproached for the remark, he replied, " Madam, if I had thought so, I surely would not have said it."

Once, at the house of Garrick, to the terror of every one, Burke contradicted Johnson flatly, but Johnson's good sense revealed itself by his making no show of resentment. Burke's experience was, it must be said, exceptional. An equally exciting, but harmless occasion, was the only time that the author of " Rasselas "

met the man who wrote the "Wealth of Nations." Johnson called Adam Smith a liar, and Smith promptly handed back an epithet not in the Dictionary. Nevertheless, old Ursa spoke in an affectionate praise of "Adam," as he called him thereafter, thus recognizing the right of the other man to be frank if he cared to be. Johnson wanted no privilege that he was not willing to grant to others—except perhaps that of dictator of opinions.

When Blair asked Johnson if he thought any modern man could have written "Ossian," Johnson replied, "Yes, sir—many men, many women, and many children." And if Blair took umbrage at the remark, so much the worse for Blair.

We have recently heard of the Boston lady who died and went to Heaven, and on being questioned by an archangel as to how she liked it, replied languidly, "Very, very beautiful it all is!" And then sighed and added, "But it is not Boston!" This story seems to illustrate that all tales have their prototype, for Boswell tells of taking Doctor Johnson out to Greenwich Park, and saying, "Now, now, is n't this fine!" But Johnson would not enthuse; he only grunted, "All very fine—but it 's not Fleet Street."

On another occasion when a Scotchman was dilating on the noble prospects to be enjoyed among the hills of Scotland, Johnson called a halt by saying, "Sir, let me tell you that the noblest prospect a Scotchman ever

sees is the highroad that leads him to England." ❧ This seems to evince a strong prejudice toward Scotland, and several Scots, with their usual plentiful lack of wit, have so solemnly written it down. But the more sensible way is to conclude that the situation simply afforded opportunity for a little harmless banter. ¶ Another equally indisputable proof of prejudice is shown when Boswell tells Johnson of the wonderful preaching of a Quaker woman. Johnson listened in grim, cold silence and then exclaimed: " Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on its hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." ❧ ❧

One of the leading encyclopedias, I see, says, " Doctor Johnson was one of the greatest conversationalists of all time." The writer evidently does not distinguish between talk, conversation and harangue. Johnson could talk and he often harangued; but he was not a conversationalist. Neither could he address a public assembly, and I do not find that he ever attempted it. Good talkers are seldom orators. One reads with amusement tinged with pity, of Carlyle's sleepless nights and cold, terror-fraught anticipations of his Lord Rector's speech. In deliberative gatherings a very small man could apply the snuffers to the great Dictator of Letters.

" Sir," said Doctor Johnson to a talkative politician, at a dinner-party, " I perceive you are a vile Whig," and

then he proceeded to demolish him. Yet Johnson himself was a Whig, although he never knew it; just as he was a liberal in religion, and yet was boastful of being a stanch Churchman.

Johnson's irritability never vented itself against the helpless. His charity knew no limit—not even the bottom of his purse. When he had no money to give, he borrowed it. And when his pension was three hundred pounds a year, the Thrales could not figure out that he spent more than seventy or eighty on himself. The rest went to his dependents. In his latter days his home was a regular museum of waifs and strays. There was Miss Williams, the ancient aristocratic spinster who came to London to have an operation performed on one of her eyes. She came to Johnson's home and remained ten years, because she had been a friend of his wife. This claim was enough, and she slid into the head place in Johnson's household. Her peevishness used to drive the old man, at times, into the street; but that tongue of his, with its crushing retorts, was ever silent and tender towards her. The poor creature became blind, and used to shock the finicky Boswell by testing the fulness of the teacups with her finger.

Then there was a Mrs. Desmoulins and her daughter, who drifted down from Lichfield and came to Johnson, because forty years before, he, too, had lived in Lichfield. He gave them house-room, treated them as guests,

and each week left a half-guinea on the mantel of their room ☙ ☙

Then there was the broken-down Levett, and Francis Barber, who, coming as a servant, remained as one of the family, because he was too old to work. A Miss Carmichael, in green spectacles and bombazine, carrying a cane, completed what the Doctor called his "seraglio." Writing to Mrs. Thrale in playful mood, telling of his household troubles, he says, "Williams hates everybody; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll loves none of them." And he, the great, gruff and mighty Ursa Major, listened to all their woes, caring for them in sickness, wiping the death-dew from their foreheads, wearing crape upon his sleeve for them when dead ☙

SAMUEL JOHNSON

THIS man tasted all the fame that is one man's due; he had all the money he needed, or knew how to use; the coveted LL. D. came from his Alma Mater; and the patronage from Lord Chesterfield, for which he craved, only that he might fling it back. He was the friend and confidant of the great and proud, deferred to by the King and sought out by those who prized the far-reaching mind and subtle imagination—the things that link us with the Infinite. The fear of hell and dread of death that haunted him in youth and middle age, finally gave way to faith and trust. When partial paralysis came to him at midnight, his sanity did not fail him, and knowing the worst, he yet hesitated to disturb the other members of the household, but went to sleep, philosophizing on the phenomena of the case—alert for more knowledge, as was his wont. Morning came and being speechless, he wrote on his ever-ready pad of paper and handing the sheet to his servant, watched with amused glances the perplexity and terror of the man. He next wrote to his friend, Mrs. Thrale, that letter, a classic of wit and resignation, wherein he explains his condition and excuses himself for not calling upon her and explaining the matter by word of mouth.

Such willingness to accept the inevitable is curative. He grew better and recovered his speech. But old age is a disease that has no cure save death. Johnson accepted the issue as a brave man should—thankful for

the gift of conscious life that had been his. When the last hour was nigh he sent loving messages to his nearest friends, repeating their names over one by one. His last recorded words were directed to a young woman who called upon him, " God bless you, my dear."

And so he passed painlessly and quietly into the sleep that knows no waking; pleased at last to know that his dust would rest in Westminster Abbey.

Thus ended, as the day dies out of the western sky, this life, seemingly so full of tempest and contradiction. The autumn of his life was full of enjoyment, and no day passed but that some one, weak, weary and worn, arose and called him blessed. Most of his wild imprecations and blustering contradictions were reserved for those who fattened on such things, and who came to be tossed and gored. In his spirit Socrates and Falstaff joined hands. In his life there was a deal of gladness—far, far more than of misery and unrest; which fact I believe is true of every life.

The Universe seems planned for good.

A world made up of such men as Samuel Johnson would be a wild chaos of tasks undone. But since Nature has never sent but one such man, and more than a century has passed since his death and we know not yet with whom to compare him, we need have no fears. The world is held in place through the opposition of forces: and the body of every healthy man is the battle-ground of animal organisms that match strength

against strength. So, too, a healthy society always has these active and sturdy organisms, which set in play other forces that hold in check their seeming excess. That the Divine Energy should incarnate itself and find expression in the form of a man, and that this man should inspire others to think and write, to do and dare, is a subject the contemplation of which should make us stand uncovered. The companionship of Johnson inspired Reynolds to better painting, Garrick to stronger acting, Burke to more profound thinking—and hundreds of others, too, quenched their thirst at the rock which he smote whenever he discoursed or wrote.

Sympathy is the first essential to insight. So with sympathy, I pray, behold this blundering giant, and you will see that the basis of his character was a great Sincerity. He was honest—doggedly honest—and saw with flashing vision the thing that was; and thither he followed, crowding, pushing, knocking down whatsoever opinion or prejudice was in the way. And so he ever struggled forward. But hate him not, for he is thy brother—yea! he is brother to all who strive and reach forward toward the Ideal. Shining through dust and disorder, now victorious, now eclipsed in deepest gloom, in him is the light of genius; and this is never base, but at the worst is admirable, lovable with pity. There was pride in his heart, but no vanity; and he should be loved for this if for no other reason: he had the courage to make an enemy. In his great heart were

wild burstings of affection, and a hunger for love that only the grave requited. There, too, were fierce flashes of wrath, smothered in an hour by the soft dew of pity. His faults and follies were manifold, as he often lamented with tears; but the soul of the man was sublime in its qualities—worldwide in its influence.

HERE ENDETH VOLUME VI OF THE LITTLE JOURNEYS, THE SAME BEING TO THE HOMES OF ENGLISH AUTHORS, AS WRITTEN BY ELBERT HUBBARD. THE TITLE-PAGE AND INITIALS DESIGNED BY ROYCROFT ARTISTS, AND THE WHOLE DONE INTO A PRINTED BOOK BY THE ROYCROFTERS AT THEIR SHOP, WHICH IS IN EAST AURORA, ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK, MCM

125

